Altitude Attractions looks toward the future featuring new attractions — pages 34-36

Amusement TODAY
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Wilderness at the Smokies nearly doubles size of indoor water park

AT: *Jeffrey Seifert*
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SEVIERVILLE, Tenn. — The newly opened indoor water park expansion at the **Wilderness at the Smokies Lodge** started welcoming guests on December 19, on the park's 15th anniversary, just in time for the holiday season. The $40 million expansion, with an additional 40,000 square feet, almost doubles the size of the indoor water park, Wild WaterDome. Among the key attractions is Ridge Runner, a three-story water coaster from **WhiteWater West** of British Columbia, Canada. The master-blaster-style coaster features three steep drops, uphill blasts, and the first-of-its-kind Reverse AquaLucent effect, in which thrill seekers traverse through clear sections of enclosed tube highlighted with colorful patterns.

Riders on Ridge Runner board two-person rafts and upon dispatch plunge down a 22-foot drop reaching speeds up to 29 mph before encountering the first uphill blast. That propels them into a right hairpin turn inside the first Reverse AquaLucent section, which is punctuated with colorful dots. A second drop leads into an open flume, followed by an uphill blast into a sharp left turn inside another Reverse AquaLucent tube with striped patterns. The water coaster drop and

See WILDERNESS, page 6

The Ridge Runner water coaster features three drops and three uphill blasts as well as the first use of a Reverse AquaLucent enclosed tube.
COURTESY WILDERNESS AT THE SMOKIES RESORT

Catapult Falls is an ideal attraction to cool off guests on hot summer days.
AT/TIM BALDWIN

Intamin supplies Catapult Falls

SeaWorld San Antonio debuts the world's first launched flume attraction

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
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SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Although announced for 2023, the highly anticipated Catapult Falls made its debut after final tests and modifications were made on the first-of-its-kind water ride this past winter.

"**SeaWorld San Antonio** is thrilled to open Catapult Falls, the world's first launched flume coaster, which also boasts the steepest drop on a ride of its kind," said SeaWorld San Antonio Park President **Jodi Davenport**, at the ride's opening. "The highly anticipated flume coaster is the perfect family ride for our guests, giving them another way to cool off at SeaWorld."

Log flumes have been staples in theme parks since the first one debuted in 1963. Over time, many have disappeared from parks, typically owing to age. Upon opening, Catapult Falls has some distinctive features to make it stand out.

Among its bragging rights is the steepest drop on a flume ride. At 53 degrees, the 37 mph plunge dives below a queuing bridge into an airtime hill before making its spectator splash into the final pool.

"The view from the top of the lift is gorgeous. You really feel even higher than you actually are. You have a bird's-eye-view of the park," said **Ray Gonzales**, marketing manager.

But that's only the beginning — or in this case, the finale. Leading up to the exhilarating dive is the world's first launch on a flume ride. Supplied by **Intamin**, the innovative feature uses belts to propel the boats at 30 feet per second. As riders skim above the surface of the water, sprays of refreshment cool riders before the boats rise over a hill and dip into the first of two splashdown pools.

"What took me by surprise was just how smooth it is. It is about five minutes long from the time you get into the boat until the time you get out — so it is nice and long. I think the biggest thing that blew my mind was the launch," Gonzales told *Amusement Today*. "It's just different; you've never felt anything like that on any type of [flume] ride."

Another iconic component of the ride is the vertical

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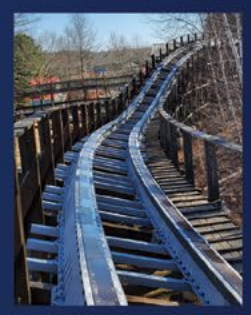

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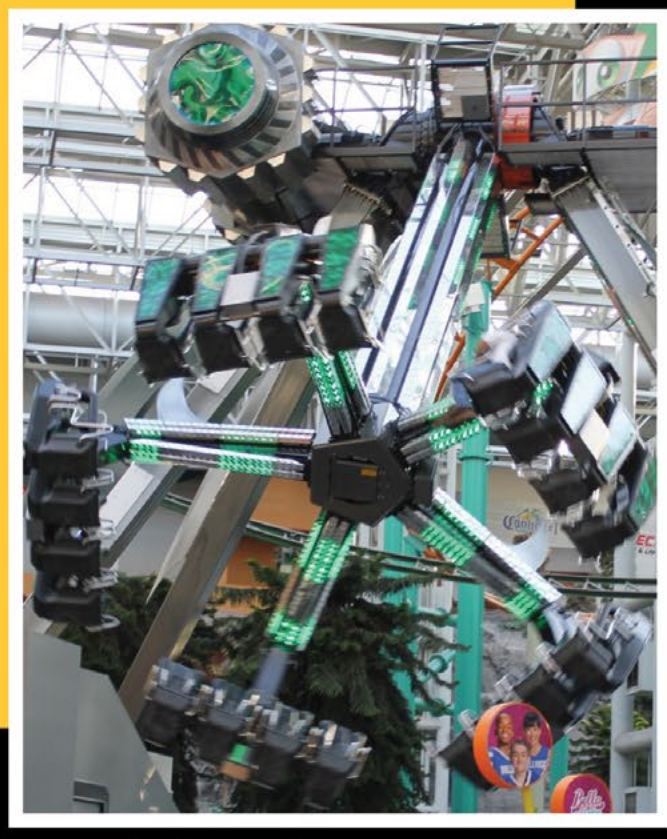

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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

***AT* NOTEBOOK:** *John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com*

No headline for you!

Robinson

Controversy grabs headlines. Controversy uses the media as free marketing. Controversy often generates a public outcry that was never there before. Controversy — in some cases — is manufactured purely just for attention.

Ingrid Newkirk, president of PETA (from here on out referred to as "that group"), wrote a letter to Chance Rides recently in an attempt to urge the company to stop manufacturing carousels with horses and other animals for patrons to ride on. In the letter, that group is claiming "...Animal-themed carousel sets reinforce the notion that these sentient beings are simply here for our entertainment."

I'll be open and up-front, I am an animal lover and have spent many hours of my personal time helping rescue, medicate, nurture and protect stray, abused and neglected animals. When my first pet, a cat, attacked a baby bunny, my mother and I spent days trying to nurse it back to health. I've protested outside of courthouses when abused animals were returned to their abusers.

That group — on the other hand — euthanizes nearly 70% of the animals it "rescues." That group protests medical animal testing and yet had a high-ranking, high-profile executive who was kept alive via a medicine made possible by animal testing. That group will lead protests against circus animals at Ringling Bros. Circus performances, but ignore the smaller touring circuses with the exact same performing animals ... because protests at smaller circuses won't garner headline attention.

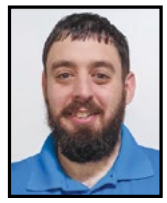
That group is all about getting itself attention and causing controversy for the sake of controversy. They use no scientific study or psychologically-backed theories in the assertion against Chance Rides and other carousel manufacturers, they just use bold statements hoping to garner more and more press, and encourage donations to flow that group's way.

Amusement Today's believes that group's unnecessary attack is worth addressing to our industry as a whole. However, that group won't get a headline, needless mentions or any further ink in this publication.

FLINT'S VIEW: *Bubba Flint*

INDUSTRY VOICE: *Jimmy Titko, American Coaster Enthusiasts*

Preserving the experience



Titko

On February 2, 2024, The Lakemont Partnership (current operators of Lakemont Park, Altoona, Pennsylvania) announced that no rides would operate during the 2024 season. This includes Leap-the-Dips.

Leap-the-Dips is not just the world's oldest roller coaster, it is a time capsule into the American way of life of 120 years ago. Roller coasters like Leap-the-Dips dotted the map across America and were mainstays of American life in the early 1900s. Between 1889 and 1922 nearly 400 of these rides were operated across the United States. Little towns like Silver Lake, Ohio, to the biggest cities like Chicago, Illinois, shared one thing in common: a roller coaster like Leap-the-Dips.

Now, only one remains.

The history of the ride is easy to document. Records are kept, pictures taken, stories written, books published. But the one thing that cannot be captured is the lived experience of generations taking a ride on the Leap-the-Dips. Five generations of kids getting off Leap-the-Dips and telling their parents how wild that little nine foot drop was. These lived experiences connect us.

American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE) is committed to doing everything we can to support the continued operation of this (now) one-of-a-kind roller coaster. ACE has contributed nearly $150,000 to Leap-the-Dips in our organization's history. ACE was there in the late 1980s when the wrecking ball seemed inevitable and in 1999 when Leap-the-Dips returned to give another generation of memories. Today, ACE is here to support any operator that shares our passion for Leap-the-Dips and its continued operation for generations to come.

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2 MINUTE DRILL

AT: Janice Witherow

Dalton Fischer, Silver Dollar City

Dalton Fischer brings a perfect blend of energy, commitment and a creative mind to his role as communications manager for **Silver Dollar City**. A former ambassador for the **IAAPA** Expo in Orlando and intern at Silver Dollar City, Fischer's passion for the industry and his job is evident. A fan of **Formula 1** racing, roller coasters and family time, he is "one to watch" in the future of the amusement business.

Former IAAPA Expo Ambassador and current communications manager for Silver Dollar City, Dalton Fischer has a bright future in the industry. COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY

Title: Communications Manager.

Number of years in the industry: Six years; four at Silver Dollar City.

Best thing about the industry: It's our guests; seeing those folks we host create real memories while experiencing our attractions means the world to me.

Favorite amusement ride: Outlaw Run! That's our RMC wooden roller coaster.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be … Visiting parks all around the country and maybe the world!

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Our guests' constantly changing and evolving expectations of experiences and service.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is … Each year, I love hearing the hustle and bustle of guests arriving at the park for opening day — music to my ears!

My favorite thing about spring is … The beautiful dogwood trees found all around Missouri.

The last time I ate fast food was … This morning… a free Chick-fil-a biscuit!

My all-time best vacation was … Last October, we took our son to Orlando for his first visit, and it was the first vacation where it wasn't about *us* necessarily, but about him.

Favorite flavor of ice cream: Our park's Time Traveler ice cream: French silk ice cream with marshmallow bon bons, chocolate flakes and thick fudge sauce.

All-time favorite sports team: I gotta go back to my roots and say the Kansas City Royals. I've loved them the longest, and I'll never forget our World Series win in 2015. Oh, how I long for another!

My "must-see" television show is … *"Formula 1: Drive to Survive"* (Netflix).

On a typical Sunday morning, you can find me … Prepping for the day's/evening's Formula 1 race, while doing work inside and outside our house.

The one thing I always seem to put off is … Planning for any sort of big trip or vacation. We'll know where we want to go and when, but actually typing out the itinerary is always at the eleventh hour.

I would best describe my office as … Historic and eclectic; plenty of Silver Dollar City historical materials and signage, along with knick-knacks of my own interests.

If I was to join the circus, I would hands-down be a … Ringmaster. I want that top-hat/mustache combo!

The most adventurous thing I have done lately is … Climbing the stairs and catwalks of our new Fire In The Hole roller coaster recently felt adventurous to me!

Favorite condiment: Anything that even remotely resembles Chick-Fil-A sauce.

Ultimate movie soundtrack: Any *Harry Potter* movie soundtrack

The celebrity I would most like to have dinner with is … David Blaine, of course.

Something make-believe that you wish was real: Any form of a flying car.

In one word, my life is … Fortunate.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Teaming with the Wonder Squad

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — At the opening of Morgan's Wonderland's largest expansion to date, Michael Coleman of Zamperla wanted to have his picture taken with the park's Wonder Squad. Morgan's Wonderland's "team" turns disabilities into super-abilities. Zamperla was a supplier of one of the four new attractions, and Coleman wanted to be on hand to see first riders and be inspired to further Zamperla's initiative of inclusion, believing everyone deserves to have fun. *[See the full details of this expansion in the May 2024 issue of* Amusement Today*.]* AT/TIM BALDWIN

WILDERNESS
Continued from page 1

turn sequence repeats a third time into a final set of patterns inside another Reverse AquaLucent tube. For the finale, riders loop through a dark tube before finishing in the open runout section.

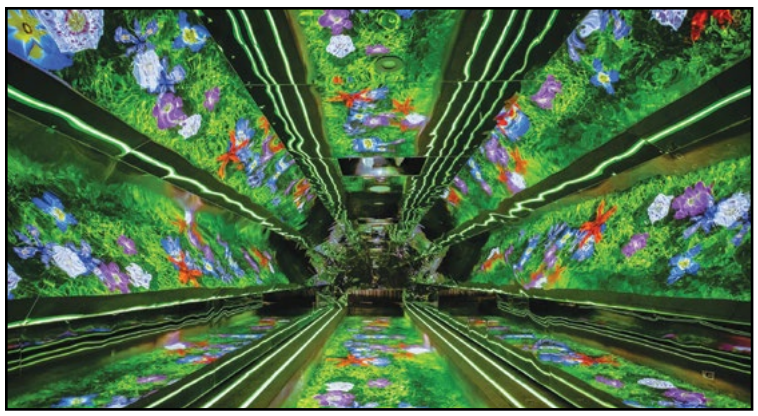
The expansion also includes the Kaleidoscope Kavern Lazy River, which, as the name implies, has guests floating through a dreamlike universe that features an immersive multimedia tunnel with video projection, dynamic lighting and a spatialized soundtrack. As guests float through Kaleidoscope Kavern's immersive tunnel, they encounter visions and soundscapes inspired by the natural beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains, including fireflies, starlit skies and Tennessee's changing seasons. The special effects and the custom soundtrack were created by **Moment Factory**, a multimedia entertainment company headquartered in Montreal, Canada, that specializes in the design of immersive environments. Many visitors to the Smoky Mountain region will already be familiar with Moment Factory's projects, which include Astra Lumina, the enchanted night walk at nearby **Anakeesta** in Gatlinburg (see *AT* Vol. 26 Issue 9, Dec. 2022).

As guests float through Kaleidoscope Kavern's immersive tunnel they enter a dreamlike universe with video projection, dynamic lighting and a spatialized soundtrack that has sounds coming from different locations within the tunnel. COURTESY THE MOMENT FACTORY

According to **Pete Tennis**, managing director, "There are actually nine 'themes' in this immersive journey that guests can experience. Some are more realistic, and others are fantasy. They include the sight of dancing fireflies; the changing seasons; the sound of water; chromatic currents; the evolving cycle of life; and my personal favorite, Aurora + Aqua Borealis, where the worlds of water and sky collide as if you are dreaming.

"This is literally a one-of-a-kind lazy river that was created specifically for our resort. The lights and mesmerizing patterns are projected upon the tunnel's walls, the tubes and even the guests' bodies, and then when you combine it with the sounds of nature, it really makes this immersive experience an incredible odyssey. I can't wait for everyone to experience it," added Tennis.

The latest attraction opening as this issue goes to press will be the water park's new Lookout Lagoon rooftop pool with a glass edge, set for completion by mid-March 2024. The pool takes advantage of the waterpark's expanded rooftop by adding a glass-edge pool providing stunning views of the Smoky Mountain range. This area will also be home to the Peak Rooftop Bar and Eatery, three rooftop cabanas, and an entertainment stage for live performances. For convenience, an elevator will transport guests to and from this area.



When it opens this month, Lookout Lagoon will offer stunning views of the Smoky Mountain ridgeline.
COURTESY WILDERNESS AT THE SMOKIES

The master planning, design and build was overseen by **Aquatic Development Group** (ADG) of Cohoes, New York. ADG's relationship with **Wilderness Resorts** dates back several decades. ADG was the original design/builder of the Wilderness at the Smokies indoor water park in 2009, and before that, played the role of design and equipment supplier at Wilderness Resort in the Wisconsin Dells. ADG more recently worked with Wilderness Development Corp. on the award-winning $90 million outdoor water park **Soaky Mountain**, in 2020, which is situated just across the street from the Wilderness at the Smokies resort. It was the only new water park construction in North America to finish and open during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

"We were thrilled for the opportunity to once again collaborate with Wilderness Resorts for this exciting and creative water park expansion," said **Jim Dunn**, president of ADG. "We love working with longtime clients, who trust our ability to be innovative in design, while still meeting their needs."

ADG was also instrumental in the renovation of the Snapping Turtle Indoor/Outdoor Play Lagoon and the Magnolia Grove hot spa. Wilderness requested ADG develop a creative design to convert a portion of the existing indoor/outdoor pool and the existing spa. The new area has ample seating, including 25 feet of benches inside for people to relax on and 45 feet of benches outside. The water is heated to a pleasant 101 degrees, and there are plenty of jets releasing water so guests can unwind and fully enjoy the relaxing part of their Wilderness vacation. Younger guests looking to expend energy can enjoy a 1,055-square-foot activity pool with a three-sided basketball hoop feature in the center allowing groups to "hoop it up" with friends.

Portions of the existing Wild WaterDome were upgraded so that along with the new addition, the park now offers 500 more seats, along with nine more cabanas. Six were added to the mezzanine level and three to the new rooftop area.

"The expansion practically doubles the footprint of our indoor waterpark and provides more opportunities for guests of all ages to spread out and enjoy a diverse array of attractions, said Tennis. "Guests absolutely love Kaleidoscope Kavern because they have never seen anything like it. The water coaster is a true hit with those who like an adventure, and Lookout Lagoon is the perfect setting to just relax and take in the beauty of the Smokies."

Wilderness at the Smokies is the fourth development created by the **Wilderness Development Corporation** — a family-owned and operated company that started its legacy in Wisconsin Dells.

The first resort, **Wilderness Hotel & Golf Resort** opened in the Dells in June 1995 with 443 units, the Fort Wilderness indoor water park, two outdoor pools and a hot tub. Today the Wisconsin development includes three properties totaling nearly 500,000 square feet and offers four indoor and four outdoor water parks.

Wilderness at the Smokies opened in June 2008 with the 234-room Stone Hill Lodge and Salamander Springs outdoor water park. Later that same year in December, the 472-suite River Lodge and Wild WaterDome indoor water park opened. The resort has grown to become Tennessee's largest year-round water park resort. Along with the newly expanded Wild WaterDome, the resort encompasses the Stone Hill Lodge; River Lodge suites and 20 Villas; two seasonal outdoor waterparks; an indoor family entertainment center; a variety of dining and shopping options; a 36-hole championship golf course adjacent to the resort; and more than 200,000 square feet of meeting and convention space adjacent to Stone Hill Lodge.

CATAPULT
Continued from page 1

lift tower. Like at its sister park in San Diego and its flume coaster, San Antonio's Catapult Falls lifts riders quickly and dramatically to the highest part of the ride — 55 feet.

Riders only have seconds to take in the gorgeous view before plunging into the attraction's climax.

The splash zone pays homage to the park's original flume. In 1991, SeaWorld San Antonio added its first ride, Texas Splashdown. This **Arrow** log flume was originally built at **Boardwalk and Baseball** in Florida in 1987. When that property closed in 1990, the flume was relocated to San Antonio and was a huge hit. After two decades of operation in San Antonio, the park retired the ride in 2011, but fans will note the subtle wink to its history as Catapult Fall's splash area is named Texas Splashdown Zone.

"For a lot of people, Texas Splashdown has a special place in their hearts. It was the first ride here at the park — and the first ride at *any* of the SeaWorld parks," Gonzales noted. "The ride was aging, and the manufacturer didn't exist anymore, so when it was time for that ride to go, there were people that were heartbroken that it was gone. When we announced this ride, there was a lot of enthusiasm for bringing a flume back again."

The entire ride is completely new. The only things repurposed from the original attraction were the queue structures, which in the past were sometimes used as haunts during the park's Halloween festival.

Catapult Falls's climactic splashdown (above left) is fun for spectators and those willing to get soaked watching. Boats launch across the water's surface at 30 feet per second (above right) and the 55-foot plunge (below) is taken at 53 degrees. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Feeling completely fresh, Catapult Falls incorporates a National Park vibe.

"Once we saw what the ride was going to look like and the area that we were going to put it in, we had a bunch of trees here. Together, we came up with this idea to have a National Park feel to it," Gonzales told *AT*. "That was something specific to our park and to our area here in San Antonio. Once we chose that theming, you see that this is the most themed attraction we've ever done here at the park."

Among the thematic elements are campsites, geysers and fun signage, a few of which will make locals chuckle. Strolling through the queue houses, guests will look up and see rowing oars, fishing poles and other objects to set the stage for outdoor recreation. An original soundtrack heard throughout the queuing structures was specifically created for the park.

A billboard seen as a showpiece during the ride features a hiker standing before Catapult Falls. Those in the know, particularly park staff, will note initials on the hiker.

"**George Ronald Hurley** was our manager of general services. He had been here for years. He was probably one of the best general maintenance professionals when it comes to rides and attractions," said Gonzales. "Unfortunately, during the construction of this ride, we lost Georgie. For us, this is a tribute. This was going to be the last ride he was going to work on. His initials are found on the hiker that appears on the billboard."

Like the majority of SeaWorld attractions, there is an educational message to be found.

"We actually worked with the San Antonio River Authority," Gonzales said. "It tells you the importance of rivers in the area. We give you a nice little story as you go throughout our queue."

With year-round operation, SeaWorld San Antonio can have warm days early in the year. However, the addition of another water ride is a blessing.

"As you know, summers in South Texas can be brutal," Gonzales said. "The families that come to the park are looking for another way to get refreshed, and Catapult Falls delivers with that. You will get soaked."

The park offers two other water rides. One is another Intamin ride, Rio Loco, a rapids ride. A **Mack Rides** Super Splash also provides splashing fun. The three water attractions are spread throughout the park. In addition to the water rides, Intamin also provided a launch coaster over the park's lake in 2017.

Guests as short as 42 inches can ride with an adult or alone at 48 inches. Each boat seats eight passengers with a lap bar restraint. When all 11 boats are in service, the ridership can reach 1,000 people per hour. A moving conveyor in the station helps reach full capacity.

The ride's National Park-style theming (above left) pays tribute to a team member with a long career at the park. Catapult Falls has the steepest drop on any flume ride in the world (above middle). The vertical lift (above right) is one of the ride's distinctive features. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

Duckpin Bowling sees growth — page 19 / Florida State Fair numbers down — page 24

Vekoma introduces multiple new attractions to its product line

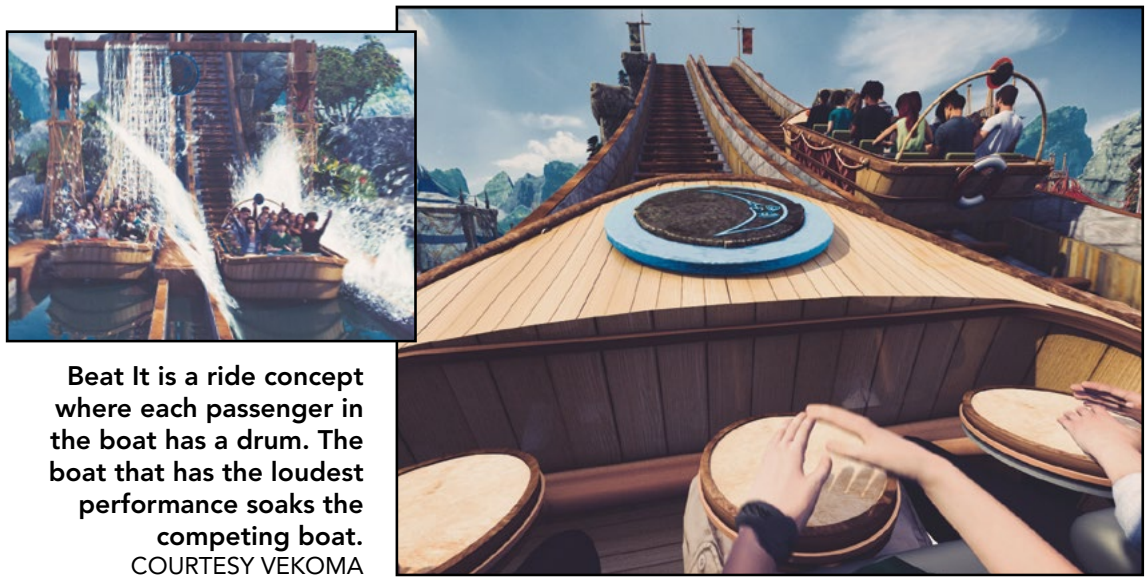
AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

VLODROP, The Netherlands — An undeniable powerhouse in today's coaster manufacturing world, Vekoma is spreading its wings a little wider. Or to say it differently, taking flight or making a splash.

A new water ride being developed is called Beat It. The boat ride features two channels with dual lifts and drops. While ascending the lift, riders start beating the drum installed in front of them. The winning boat causes water effects to douse the opposing vessel.

Each boat seats 12 riders, each with his or her own drum.

"The idea of the Beat It ride was to create a unique boat ride with active interactions between riders (drummers!) and with a grand finale — the losing boat gets soaked by the winning boat," said **Ricardo Tonding Etges**, sales, The Americas. "The winning boat basically gets down the drop after the losing boat, generating the splash. That's how we came up with the Beat It ride, using existing proven technology of boat rides and integrating a special touch to the ride experience. We are currently working on a couple of groundbreaking projects using the system, and we can't wait to experience them."



Beat It is a ride concept where each passenger in the boat has a drum. The boat that has the loudest performance soaks the competing boat. COURTESY VEKOMA

How is it determined which boat is louder? Each seat has its own drum including sound feedback.

"Guests are able to influence the ride experience given that the drums' inputs will be used to determine the average boat output, which can be the number of drum hits or even the rhythm," Tonding Etges told *Amusement Today*. "The show control is directly connected to the ride control, allowing for the different outcomes of the ride."

Tonding Etges said Vekoma's suspended water coaster has been upgraded. These upgrades use the latest technologies when it comes to track design, trains and interactive elements, with a maintenance-friendly interface and a fun ride experience that combines a water battle with a coaster experience.

Tonding Etges says the advanced concept has garnered attention. "Since the [IAAPA Expo], "we've seen traction with both dry and water parks that want to create a new kind of water ride experience."

The trains are equipped with reservoirs on the front coaches that release a water bomb over nonriders in designated areas. Water blasters, geysers and other elements can be placed at ground level to create interaction with spectators and riders.

Although unable to offer any further details, Vekoma hinted that two have been sold.

In even further news, Vekoma is introducing its own suspended dark ride. *AT* asked what makes a Vekoma ride system different than what others might supply.

"Our suspended dark ride system was designed with the objective of disrupting the dark ride segment by creating a truly innovative, one-of-a-kind dark ride experience, using a combination of the suspended position of the passenger, the fully-programmable 360 degrees rotation and the possibility of creating pitch and roll motions by the dynamics of the ride," noted Tonding Etges. "The ride has been fully tested at our factory and the experience is truly exceptional."

According to Vekoma materials, the vehicle is designed for the entire family, including passengers three years and up. The swing of the vehicle provides a very natural feel and smooth ride experience. The rotation unit built into each vehicle can face passengers in any direction.

Based on a ride length of four to five minutes, Vekoma has established a ride capacity of 816 passengers per hour. This comes from approximately 70 riders aboard vehicles at the same time. Vekoma also promotes that the vehicles are easily reachable for maintenance.

While the manufacturer can customize to any customer, an engineered design shows a concept built for an indoor space of 60.4 meters (almost 200 feet) by 53.2 meters (175 feet), with 32 feet of height. Vekoma would be the supplier of the ride system, but the nature of the indoor scenes — with the options of physical sets, video screens or interactive experiences — would be a partnership at the customer's discretion. This configuration would feature 17 vehicles, each seating four passengers.

The suspended dark ride features 360 degrees of motion and can be used with physical sets or screens (above left). Vekoma's upgraded suspended water coaster features interaction with people and props on the ground below (above right). COURTESY VEKOMA

Environment will feature Shrek, Trolls Trollercoaster and Kung Fu Panda

DreamWorks Land opening Summer 2024 at Universal Orlando

ORLANDO — This summer, **Universal Orlando Resort** will debut DreamWorks Land — a vibrant new themed environment inspired by **DreamWorks Animation**'s characters from the *Shrek*, *Trolls* and *Kung Fu Panda* film franchises.

Located in the **Universal Studios Florida** theme park, the expansive area will feature tons of fun for the entire family and include a family-friendly coaster, multiple interactive play areas, live entertainment, character meet-and-greets and more.

As soon as guests step into the new land, the vivid world and imagination of DreamWorks Animation will surround them as they embark on exciting adventures like exploring Shrek's Swamp just outside of his 35-foot-tall cottage, taking a ride on a dazzling Trollercoaster, interacting with Po in the Panda Village and meeting favorite characters like Gabby from *Gabby's Dollhouse*. Guests will also discover unique treats, photo-op-worthy murals, interactive play areas, splash pads and entertainment offerings themed to popular DreamWorks stories.

The 700-acre Universal Orlando resort is home to three theme parks — Universal Studios Florida, Universal Islands of Adventure and Universal Volcano Bay — boasting innovative and immersive experiences.

Universal Studios Florida's new DreamWorks Land will immerse guests in the worlds of popular animated franchises such as *Shrek* (below left) and *Trolls* (below right).
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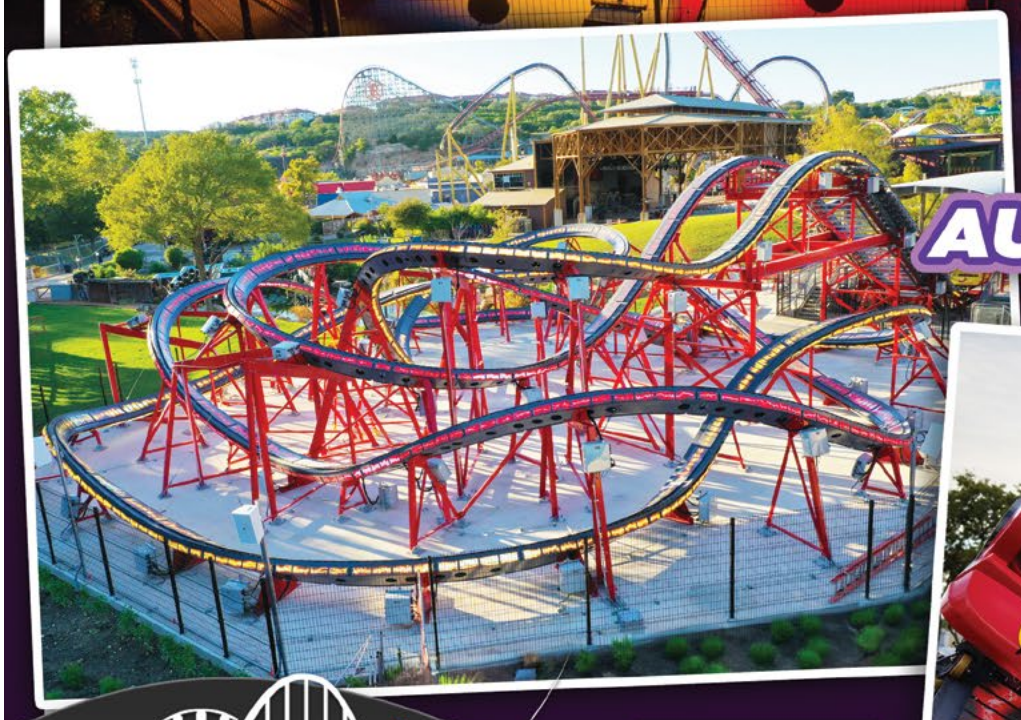

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Universal Hollywood's legendary Studio Tour celebrates 60 years

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. — In 1964, **Universal Studios Hollywood** rolled out its fleet of Glamor Trams, inviting tourists to "see film rushes of current productions, both feature and television, being made at Universal City," according to the attraction's original press release issued on July 4, 1964.

It was a novel concept to invite the public to be a fly on the wall of movie and television production. After all, no one else had ever conceived of the idea. The iconic red and white Glamor Trams, with their ruffled awnings, were staged five times a day, each lasting just over two hours.

2024 celebrates the Studio Tour's milestone 60 years, the more than 200 million guests who have experienced this attraction and, ultimately, Universal Studios Hollywood's storied history. More information will be shared soon highlighting the exciting program planned for spring and summer in support of the Studio Tour's 60th anniversary.

During its inaugural year, behind-the-scenes special effects featured a brief make-up demonstration, a display of costumes by renowned costume designer **Edith Head**, an energetic two-man stunt performance and a tour of picturesque outdoor film sets. The following year, Universal expanded its scope of entertainment to feature live entertainment that included a stunt show, animal show and screen test comedy theatre — all a precursor to what would eventually lead to the development of Universal Studios Hollywood theme park.

The point of entry for visiting guests at that time was at The Tourist Center, located at the Universal Commissary Building, where make-up artist demonstrations, trick photography and special props were on display.

That was 60 years ago, and while much has transpired in six decades, the Studio Tour has remained true to its roots of immersing guests

The iconic Studio Tour is the foundation that led to Universal Theme Parks. COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

in the awe-inspiring world of movie-making magic and providing remarkable access to production sets on a real studio lot. The once celebrated Glamor Trams are long gone and have been replaced with a contemporary 60-minute experience, infused with advanced technology that enlightens and entertains millions of film buffs, theme park fans and tourists alike visiting from across the globe. With its sights on the future, the Studio Tour is in the midst of converting its fleet of 21 diesel-hydraulic engines to electric trams to help reduce carbon emissions and improve the guest experience by reducing noise associated with the diesel-hydraulic engine.

And yet, aspects of the Glamor Tram have remained constant over this astonishing six-decade span.

Studio Tour Guides were central to the operations of the Glamor Tram tours then and remain vital to the success of the Studio Tour today. Numerous times a day, professionally trained Studio Tour Guides interact with guests, educating them on the inner workings of the movie and television lot, armed with insider information and first-hand accounts, and entertain them with tours in both English and Spanish.

The role of a Studio Tour Guide has become a highly sought-after position in recent years with candidates auditioning from around the globe for a coveted spot — and for good reason. Studio Tour Guides have evolved over time into a Hollywood "apprenticeship." Dozens of producers, directors, performers, movie and TV professionals, as well as industry executives, began their careers as Studio Tour Guides, and to this day, rank among the leaders shepherding the Studio Tour and Universal Studios Hollywood into the future.

The Studio Tour of today continues to build on its rich history and like many great blockbuster films, creates a foundation for the next big sequel … and therein lies the origins of Universal Studios Hollywood.

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More than four decades in the industry finds Guglielmi still smiling

AT: *Ron Gustafson*
Special to Amusement Today

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — It's not surprising that **Gina Guglielmi** looks forward to going to work every day.

As president of **Intermark Ride Group** (IRG), she has a storied career in the amusement industry dating back more than 40 years and readily admits loving the journey it has taken her on.

"I was 14 when I got my first real job at the **Canfield Fair** in Canfield Ohio," she recalled during a recent interview with *Amusement Today*.

"I wanted to be a ride operator, but couldn't because of my age," Guglielmi said before breaking into a chuckle. "So, I ended up babysitting for two sideshow folks: the lion-faced lady and tattooed man."

After attending Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio, Guglielmi moved to Nashville where she was able to get a firsthand grasp on the workings of the publishing side of the industry at the former trade journal *Amusement Business* (*AB*).

"I had just moved from Ohio and landed a position in the circulation department at *AB*," she noted. "We would ship out bundles of the latest edition to carnival owners and others, where they were resold to generate income for the show agents."

Gina Guglielmi

She recalled that her tenure at *AB* was like being in a revolving door as up-and-coming talent at the time — including **Reba McEntire** and others — would stop in for visits with the editorial staff.

"It was an amazing place to work," Guglielmi noted. "It was a great opportunity for me, as well as a crazy time."

On the road with legends

In her first promotion within the publication, Guglielmi became the assistant to the publisher and the job required a lot of travel. Her inaugural road gig was with late *AB* legends **Tom Powell** (writer and editor) and **Ray Pilszak** (sales manager).

Packed into a car, Powell and Pilszak took the front seat while Guglielmi was given doggy-sitting duties in the back with Pilszak's new puppy.

Guglielmi with *Amusement Today* Publisher Gary Slade (left) and *AT* reporter B. Derek Shaw at the 2018 International Association of Fairs and Expos gathering in San Antonio, Texas. COURTESY IRG

"So, here we are driving from Nashville to Gibtown (for the **International Showmen's Association Extravaganza and Trade Show,** Gibsonton, Fla.) with me sitting in the back seat with Ray's whining puppy that he has to take to his mother in Kissimmee, Florida," Guglielmi reminisced about the journey. "It was insane between the dog and the two of them screaming at each other about sports teams and betting."

As a first-timer at the much-ballyhooed Gibtown show, Guglielmi had no idea of what to expect in assisting to promote the popular publication at the event.

"When we pulled in — what a surprise!" she recalled. "I was expecting to see some huge indoor trade show at a convention center, but we were at a booth in a breezeway with a bar attached to it."

She was quick to point out that after settling into the surroundings and getting to know more about the Gibtown show, she had a much greater appreciation and respect for it, as well as the people she met there.

Guglielmi was drawn to the supplier side of the industry after attending her first **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (IAAPA) Expo while with *AB*.

"That's where I discovered how vast the industry was," she noted. "There were so many ride manufacturers I didn't know about and people from all over the world. It was amazing!"

On to new things

While her time at *AB* certainly provided some unforgettable experiences, Guglielmi was destined to break away on her own and in 1987 started a small marketing firm, **The Intermark Group**, focusing on the amusement industry.

In 1990 she moved on to become a partner at **Ital International**, a ride brokerage firm based in Nashville that — at the time — represented **Chance Rides**, as well as the used ride market.

"We eventually became the North American representatives for Italian ride manufacturers **Sartori**

▸ **See GUGLIELMI, page 15**

Paul Joseph of Baltimore's Jolly Shows purchased a Pirate ship from Fabbri Group while attending the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions Expo in Orlando, Fla. Above left at the Fabbri booth were (l to r): John Joseph, Mason Joseph, IRG's Gina Guglielmi, Fabbri Group President Gianluca Fabbri and Paul Joseph. Fireball (above middle) opened in 2022 at Adventureland, Long Island, New York. The unique roller coaster stands 78 feet tall and was the first Ride Engineers Switzerland "Roller Ball" coaster installed in North America. Guglielmo attended Fabbri's 25th Anniversary Celebration in Verona, Italy, last year (above right). COURTESY IRG

Gosetto's New York New York walk-through funhouse was delivered to Power & Thomas Midway Entertainment in January. Preston & Barbieri's one-of-a-kind carousel was delivered to Ark Encounter in Kentucky (above right). COURTESY POWERS & THOMAS, IRG

GUGLIELMI

Continued from page 14

and **Bertazzon**," she said of the 15-year position in which she gained priceless experience in dealing with the new and used rides markets.

As a seasoned veteran of the industry, Guglielmi made her boldest career move in 2006 by launching Intermark Ride Group.

"I'm the sole proprietor," she pointed out. "I had two young children at the time, and in thinking back, it really took persistence and perseverance to get started."

She admitted, "I was lucky then because some industry people 'took a chance with the new girl.' **Leslie Shaver**, also a former '*AB* girl,' has been with the company since the beginning and has been instrumental to the growth and success of IRG with sales, website maintenance and shipping logistics."

Guglielmi was heart-broken to learn of European showman Roland Koch's recent passing. He was her introduction to Munich's Oktoberfest as well as the German Showmen associations. COURTESY IRG

Today's company

IRG has a stellar portfolio of ride companies it represents today, including Italian manufacturers **Fabbri Group**, **Gosetto** and **Preston & Barbieri**. In addition, the company works with **Ride Engineers Switzerland** (RES), multiple train and people-mover firms and sells used equipment. IRG also specializes in equipment appraisals and facilitates the sale of existing parks and other attractions.

It's also a family affair at Guglielmi's firm as the eldest daughter, **Giuliana**, works as project manager and "keeps mom on track." Daughter, **Nicoletta**, is a veterinarian and both children reside in Nashville.

Reflecting on her earliest days at IRG, one of the "best sales" in getting her feet wet was selling a **KMG** (The Netherlands) Fireball from the former **Celebration City** in Branson, Mo., to the late **Frank Briggs** with **Modern Midways**, Dyer, Ind.

"It was mostly men in our industry then, and it took time for me to build up a reputation. Frank was one of the first to put his trust in me," she said. "Starting up a business, I also had to keep expenses low and working from my home office was a bonus for the company, my children and the dogs."

What's hot

According to Guglielmi, Fabbri Group's sales have been solid over the past few years.

"The Middle East is booming, while Europe is strong and our domestic push has been very successful," she emphasized. "Fabbri's Booster has been very popular, and we recently delivered a 40-meter version to **Talley Amusements** in Texas. We have a second Booster in production for the U.S. market."

An 85-meter Ferris wheel was just installed in Central Mexico, while **Paul Joseph** of Baltimore's **Jolly Shows** went to the Fabbri facility to see his new Pirate ship in production.

Guglielmi was amazed at the story Joseph returned with and shared the following: "I talked with Paul last night after he got back from Italy. He actually took his work clothes with him and helped to drill bally cloth holes on the new ride at the factory!"

Gosetto, which specializes in funhouses, dark rides and other attractions, has had "a fantastic couple of last years." **Powers and Thomas Midway Entertainment,** Wilmington, N.C., and **Cole Shows Amusement Co.,** Covington, Va., both took delivery of Gosetto's double-deck New York New York walk-through funhouse. **Fiesta Shows**, Seabrook, N.H., received a custom-themed Fun Factory funhouse in December.

U.S. carnival operators **North American Midway Entertainment** and **Deggeller Attractions** both have had Family Swingers delivered by Preston & Barbieri. The Italian supplier also designed one-of-a-kind characters, as well as themed panels on the new Journey of the Animals carousel at **Ark Encounter**, Williamstown, Ky.

Palace Playland, Old Orchard Beach, Maine, introduced a Preston & Barbieri HyperJump flat ride last August.

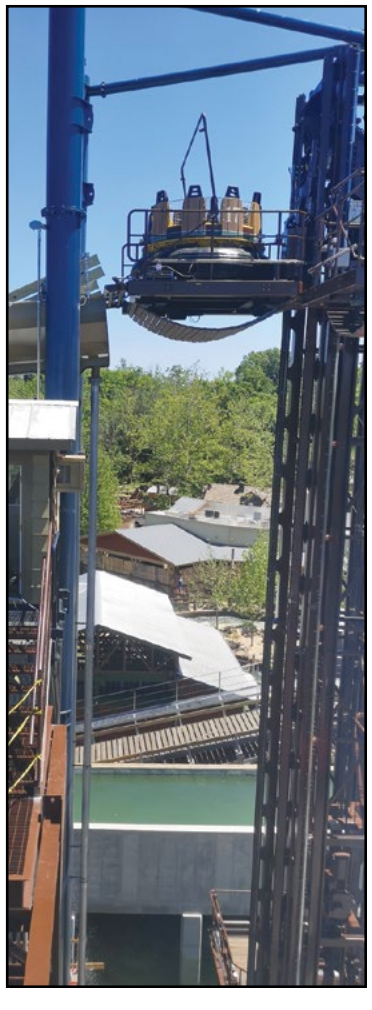
Ride Engineers Switzerland's biggest U.S. installment to date is 2020's Mystic River Falls raft ride at **Silver Dollar City**, Branson, Mo. The $23 million attraction has a unique elevator lift, a startling 45-foot drop and a total run of 2,100 feet.

Adventureland, Long Island, N.Y., took delivery of Roller Ball, an RES vertical coaster in 2022.

Optimistic

She sees a bright future in the business, commenting, "The past two years have been great for companies, and they see the need for continued investment. We are on a positive upswing, and I'm optimistic about the South American market. I'm hoping they are next on my list."

In conclusion, she said: "When I think about all of the positive memories I have had in this industry — visiting parks, fairs, events, carnival operators over the years — I never forget we are in the business of people: the customers I serve and the people they serve. People, families having fun together; laughter, joy, excitement, experiences that are forever remembered — what a great career it has been so far."

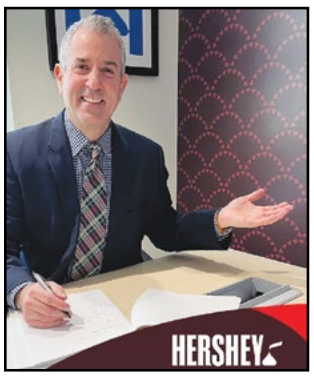


The lift on Mystic River Falls at Silver Dollar City, Branson, Missouri, was an iconic part of the huge ride installed by RES Rides. COURTESY IRG

Sally Dark Rides adds Care Bears IP to its roster of available dark rides

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Sally Dark Rides has entered a marketing partnership with Cloudco Entertainment to bring a Care Bears family dark ride experience to the attractions marketplace. Introduced in 1982 through consumer products, greeting cards, and later a series of animated television shows and feature films, Care Bears is one of the most popular and endearing children's properties in the world. Fans of all ages are drawn to the lovable, huggable bears from Care-A-Lot who inspire all to have fun, share, and care. In this family-friendly dark ride attraction, guests board moving "Cloud Cars" and are immediately immersed in a bright and colorful environment filled with special effects including sounds, scents, themed lighting, hand-crafted set pieces and cuddly Care Bears animatronic characters. "We are incredibly excited at the opportunity to bring the world of Care Bears to life by way of an immersive dark ride attraction," said Lauren Weaver, vice president of business development and marketing with Sally Dark Rides. "With such worldwide popularity from kids and adults alike, we see incredible potential with this nostalgic, huggable, colorful, and inclusive brand. We whole-heartedly believe this family dark ride would be successful in any theme park or entertainment center around the world." COURTESY CLOUDCO ENTERTAINMENT

Falcon's Beyond, Hershey partner to create themed-experience attractions



ORLANDO — **Falcon's Beyond Global, Inc.** announced a licensing agreement with **The Hershey Company**. Through this expansive contract, Falcon's will conceive and develop Hershey-branded location-based-entertainment experiences featuring the industry-leading confectionary and snack company's iconic IP, such as Hershey's, Reese's, Jolly Rancher and Twizzlers, in both the United States and international markets.

Falcon's will work with Hershey to bring the company's beloved snacks and moments of goodness to life through retailtainment destinations that offer families and snack enthusiasts new immersive ways to experience their favorite tasty brands. Each destination will be highlighted by a Hershey-inspired attraction, a food and beverage experience where visitors will savor delicious bites based on the brand, and a retail offering to shop for one-of-a-kind branded products. Additional details about the Hershey-branded experiences and the debut location will be announced at a later date.

"Falcon's is honored to work with The Hershey Company and bring some of the world's most renowned brands to life in new ways so they can be savored by even more consumers around the world," said **Cecil D. Magpuri**, CEO of Falcon's Beyond Global, Inc. "We are excited to explore what's possible with Hershey and help bring forth what makes their brands so beloved through memorable immersive entertainment experiences."

Ernie Savo, president of The Hershey Licensing Company, added, "We see our partnership with Falcon's Beyond as a huge opportunity to continue to expand our brand to consumers across the world. With their impressive track record of growing IP through innovative experiences, Falcon's is the ideal partner to extend the Hershey's family of brands in truly new and imaginative ways."

Falcon's new deal with Hershey advances the strong momentum the company has established over the past year by becoming a publicly traded company and the launch of multiple projects, initiatives and experiences across its three core business units: Falcon's Creative Group, Falcon's Beyond Destinations and Falcon's Beyond Brands.

New ride, more announced for Six Flags Over Texas

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Over Texas** announced new park enhancements for the 2024 season. One new ride, Sylvester and Tweety Pounce and Bounce, and one returning ride, Daffy Duck Bucket Blasters, will open in the Bugs Bunny Boomtown section of the park Memorial Day weekend. A retheming of the classic Chaparral Antique Cars into Dino Off Road Adventure will follow later in the summer.

Sylvester and Tweety Pounce and Bounce (**Zamperla**) is a family drop tower that lifts riders 41 feet in the air before beginning a sequence of downward pounces and upward bounces.

The returning Daffy Duck Bucket Blasters is a spinning ride that features water blasters on its bucket-shaped guest compartments so riders can spray each other while the ride is in motion. It is returning to the park after a three-year absence. The ride was removed in 2021 during the construction of Aquaman: Power Wave and is now returning in a new location..

"For 63 years, generations of guests have come to the park to have fun and experience thrills with their families," said Park President **Richard Douaihy**. "We're so pleased that these new attractions will offer our guests the opportunity to make even more memories with the people who matter most."

Additional park enhancements include new theming elements in the queues for Batman: The Ride and Mr. Freeze as well as the building of a permanent structure for the Boomtown Bar.

Later this summer, Dino Off Road Adventure will revamp the second-oldest attraction in the park with new cars, a redecorated queue, and 13 dinosaur animatronics along the ride's route.

Water battles return to Six Flags Over Texas with the reopening of Daffy Duck Bucket Blasters (above) in Bugs Bunny Boomtown. The ride that was first introduced in 2016. New for 2024 at the park is Sylvester and Tweety Pounce and Bounce, a Zamperla Sky Tower attraction (right). COURTESY SIX FLAGS, ZAMPERLA

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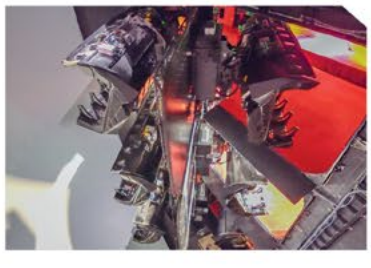

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Park Post-its

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Holiday World in Santa Claus, Indiana, lies within the path of totality for the upcoming solar eclipse on April 8. So, park officials have decided to hold a viewing event.

Holiday World opens for the 2024 season on May 11, but officials decided to open its Legend parking lot at 10 a.m. on April 8 to view the eclipse.

This one will be free to viewers. In fact, Holiday World will also distribute free solar viewing glasses, while supplies last.

The eclipse begins in Santa Claus at 12:47 p.m. CDT, with the two-minute totality beginning at 2:04 p.m. Food trucks will be on site and Holiday World will have music playing leading up to the show in the sky.

•

Dolly Parton has always been about going bigger and bolder. After nearly six decades in the country music world, she released her first rock album, " Rockstar," last fall, a few weeks after one of her most beloved hits, " Jolene" turned 50 years old.

Now, her Smoky Mountains theme park **Dollywood**, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, is following suit and going bigger. The park opened on March 9 for its longest season yet.

The 165-acre resort will be open for a record 280 days in 2024. That is 23 days more than last year for its 39th season. It will also introduce two major new features focused solely on the iconic Grammy winner.

•

Kentucky Kingdom in Louisville, Kentucky, will run for additional dates this holiday season with the launch of its new Christmas at Kentucky Kingdom event on Nov. 29. The amusement park invested $8 million in the new event, which will run through Jan. 4 and include a Santa's Village, more than one million Christmas lights, seasonal foods and character meet-and-greets.

Adding the additional season celebration extends the park's season by 24 days.

The event also includes the Snow Zone, featuring snowflakes, a glittering tree and a four-story, 175-foot-long snow tubing hill.

•

Drayton Manor in Tamworth, England, will reopen its former Shockwave stand-up roller coaster as The Wave this spring following a major overhaul. The reimagined ride will feature a new sit-down train supplied by ART Engineering. The track layout with four inversions remains the same.

•

Lightwater Valley Adventure Park, at North Stainley near Ripon, U.K., had all boosters blazing for Easter, when it opened on March 28.

The park has two brand new attractions and has relocated and extended its Soft Play Area and Theatre.

Adding to the popular Caterpillar ride for the under five-year-olds and the Ladybird ride is the new Rocket Rollercoaster, aimed at 10 to 12-year-olds, though parents can enjoy a ride on it too, with the promise of an adrenaline-fueled flight amongst the stars.

Another new attraction that opened Easter weekend is the Safari Jeep Ride with larger-than-life model animals set in landscapes relevant to their habitat.

Visitors sit in their own Safari Jeep, which takes up to four people (including adults) on the safari ride. Visitors can let their own jeep take them to see a range of wild animals, including elephants, zebras, water buffalo and lions, as they graze or rest.

•

Another train set could be on its way to the **Bay Beach Amusement Park**, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

According to the agenda that was set for the city's Parks Committee meeting last month, the **Friends of Bay Beach Amusement Park** may donate two engines and three passenger cars to the park.

It's described as a "used 2007 propane C.P. Huntington Train," but no other details about where it would come from or how much the Friends group would pay for it were reported. The train's manufacturer is **Chance Rides.**

•

The **Oklahoma City Zoo** in Oklahoma has unveiled its new Expedition Africa exhibit. The $35 million expansion project houses over 60 species, including lemurs, wildebeests, honey badgers, giraffes and dwarf mongooses.

•

Brookfield Zoo in Brookfield, Illinois, is set to rebrand as **Brookfield Zoo Chicago** as part of its Next Century Plan. That plan will be revealed this summer, along with its plan to debut a $66 million Tropical Forests exhibit in spring 2025, featuring a Gorilla Conservation Center and several animal habitats.

•

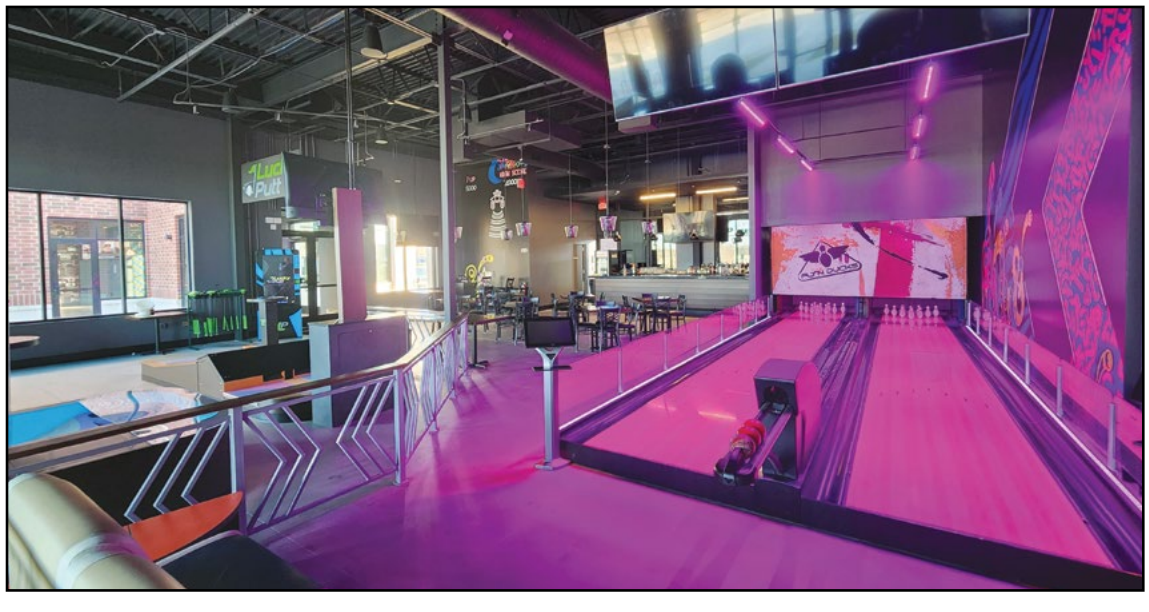
Luna Luna, an endeavor described as "the world's first art amusement park," opened its doors in Los Angeles this past December, over 30 years since it originally wowed audiences in Hamburg, Germany. The response has been considerable.

Featuring contributions from more than 30 different artists of the late 20th century, the carnival-museum hybrid now shows original works from the artistic visionaries of the late 1980s. The pieces had been in storage for 30 years.

FEC

Duckpin Bowling sees growth in popularity for entertainment

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com



Putts & Pins placed a pair of duckpin lanes in this Des Moines location. COURTESY QUBICAAMF

MECHANICVILLE, Va. and MUSKEGON, Mich. — Duckpin bowling, while played and scored like traditional ten-pin bowling, has some unique differences. While traditional bowling has regulations regarding the length of lanes and such, there are no set standards for duckpin bowling, which gives some flexibility to today's operators.

Ten-pin and Duckpin Bowling have associations that govern sanctioned competition (United States Bowling Congress and National Duckpin Bowling Congress respectively). Both have rules and regulations for leagues and/or tournaments at centers that apply for sanctioning and maintain rules, etc. However, that is optional, and for centers that are in business for entertainment and not the sport, they don't run organized competition, or if they do, it's for fun and not sanctioned.

The origins of the recreational sport are unconfirmed. The belief is that duckpin bowling originated in Baltimore, Maryland, around 1900. The name is derived from the sound and look of the pins as they went flying. Duck hunters gave it the nickname duckpin when the pins looked like flying ducks. A sportswriter at the time did a story on it, and the name stuck.

"The game was born out of a little bit of boredom," said **JR Huyck**, manager, new business development, **QubicaAMF** of Mechanicville, Virginia. "The owner of a center, closed in 1900 due to troubles, did some woodworking and duck hunting. He made these smaller bowling pins from battered ten pins and used smaller six-inch balls he had for other games, and people took to it. It didn't explode all over the world. It just became a niche in the New England states."

When automatic pin setters were developed in the 1950s, that helped keep the sport alive.

"There are about 60 traditional duckpin bowling centers left in the Northeast United States and Canada," said Huyck. "They are die-hard centers with old equipment that is very difficult to find replacement parts for."

That said, duckpin bowling is seeing a resurgence throughout the country.

Both QubicaAMF and **Brunswick** (of Muskegon, Michigan) manufacture duckpin bowling equipment. QubicaAMF names its duckpin product Fly'n Ducks. Brunswick offers it as Duckpin Social.

"Things have changed most recently," said Huyck. "There are now

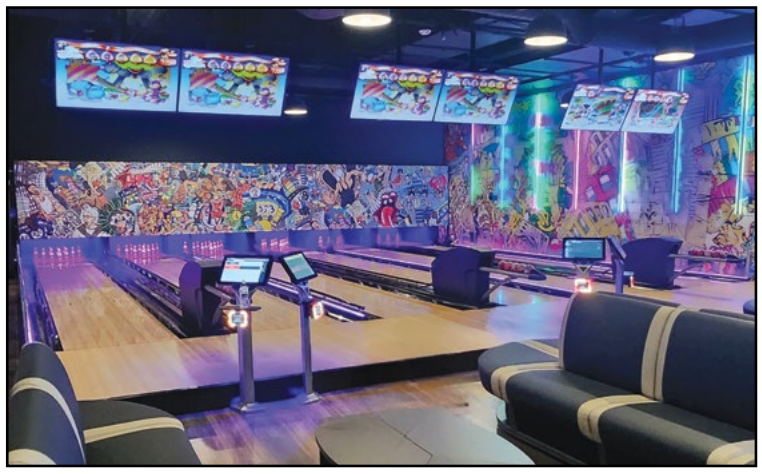
▸ **See DUCKPIN, page 20**

DUCKPIN

Continued from page 19

shortened lanes and/or approaches you see from manufacturers."

There is an association that establishes rules. In those cases, the same width of lanes and the 60-foot length of traditional bowling is still upheld. However, entertainment centers are finding the versatility — and flexibility — of duckpin bowling to their advantage.



Reset Arcade in Rossford, Ohio, offers short lanes to maximize space (above left). Treasure Island brings the game to the Las Vegas strip (above right). COURTESY QUBICAAMF

With duckpin bowling, there is no search for the right weight and length of finger holes. The reduction in needed balls is drastically reduced since each bowler uses the same size and weight of the balls (3.5 pounds). There are no holes. Today's balls are approximately five inches in diameter. The ball is held in the palm of the player's hand.

"Products like Brunswick's Duckpin Social fit the growing environment of 'competitive socializing' throughout the world," said **Kris Desroches**, director, new business development, Brunswick. "Consumers are looking for on-trend food options, craft cocktails and competitive games providing unique experiences, which Duckpin Social fits perfectly into. Today's customers, especially Gen Z and Gen Y (Millennials), are willing to spend more on experiences that can't easily be recreated at home. Duckpin Social offers low barriers to entry by not requiring rental shoes or having to choose a bowling ball, and a less intimidating look as the lane is shorter than traditional bowling, however, it is challenging enough to encourage repeat business."

"Traditional duckpin bowling is much more difficult than ten-pin bowling," said Huyck. "If you think about it, if it's the exact same length of the lane using smaller pins and smaller balls, it's much harder to knock down all the pins. There is more space between the pins."

But the game is growing.

"There are conveniences to duckpin for both the guests and the owners," said Huyck. "The fact that you don't have to store as many balls is one. But you don't have to provide bowling shoes either. Most operators don't rent shoes. And some people don't want to wear bowling shoes. People can come as they are. Also, we shortened the lanes to make the scoring more fun, and it allowed bowling in a smaller space."

Another difference is in scoring. While tabulated like traditional ten-pin bowling, because of the difficulty, a third roll per frame is given to try to get all ten pins down. If it takes three rolls, then no bonus is given if all ten pens are knocked down in the third try.

Huyck says Qubica has four different lengths the company produces — 24, 36, 48 and 60 feet — but they can customize as well. Although these shorter lanes can't host sanctioned competitions, he said that typically isn't a factor in installations.

"New places with bowling nowadays are almost all for entertainment purposes," he told *Amusement Today*. "Shorter lanes match the operators' needs and whatever type of bowling experience they want. In addition to that, the approach is customizable — 12 feet, six feet or no approach. We basically customize any bowling experience the customer wants."

Another advantage is that lanes can be self-operated, removing the need for staffing. Fly'n Ducks has "pay at the lane" with a swipe reader as an easy convenience for guests.

"The big movement here is location-based entertainment outside the home," said Huyck. "This has been growing for 15-plus years, but now it has taken on a whole new level of growth. All kinds of investors are getting in and incorporating duckpin into several different types of concepts, including breweries, sports bars, resorts and tourist destinations — pretty much anywhere people are gathering for fun, social activities with food and beverage."

"The market is predicted to grow by 28% annually through 2030," Deroches told *AT*. "We are seeing sales of Duckpin Social grow exponentially (much more than 28%) and expect this to continue. As more facilities look to stay relevant in this space, Duckpin Social is helping them provide the unique, fun experiences they need to have a competitive advantage. Being a relatively new product, there is virtually no market saturation anywhere in the country. There is low risk to our customers installing the product."

"People are wanting experiences when they go out instead of just sitting, eating and drinking," said Huyck. "This gives the operator an opportunity to extend dwell time."

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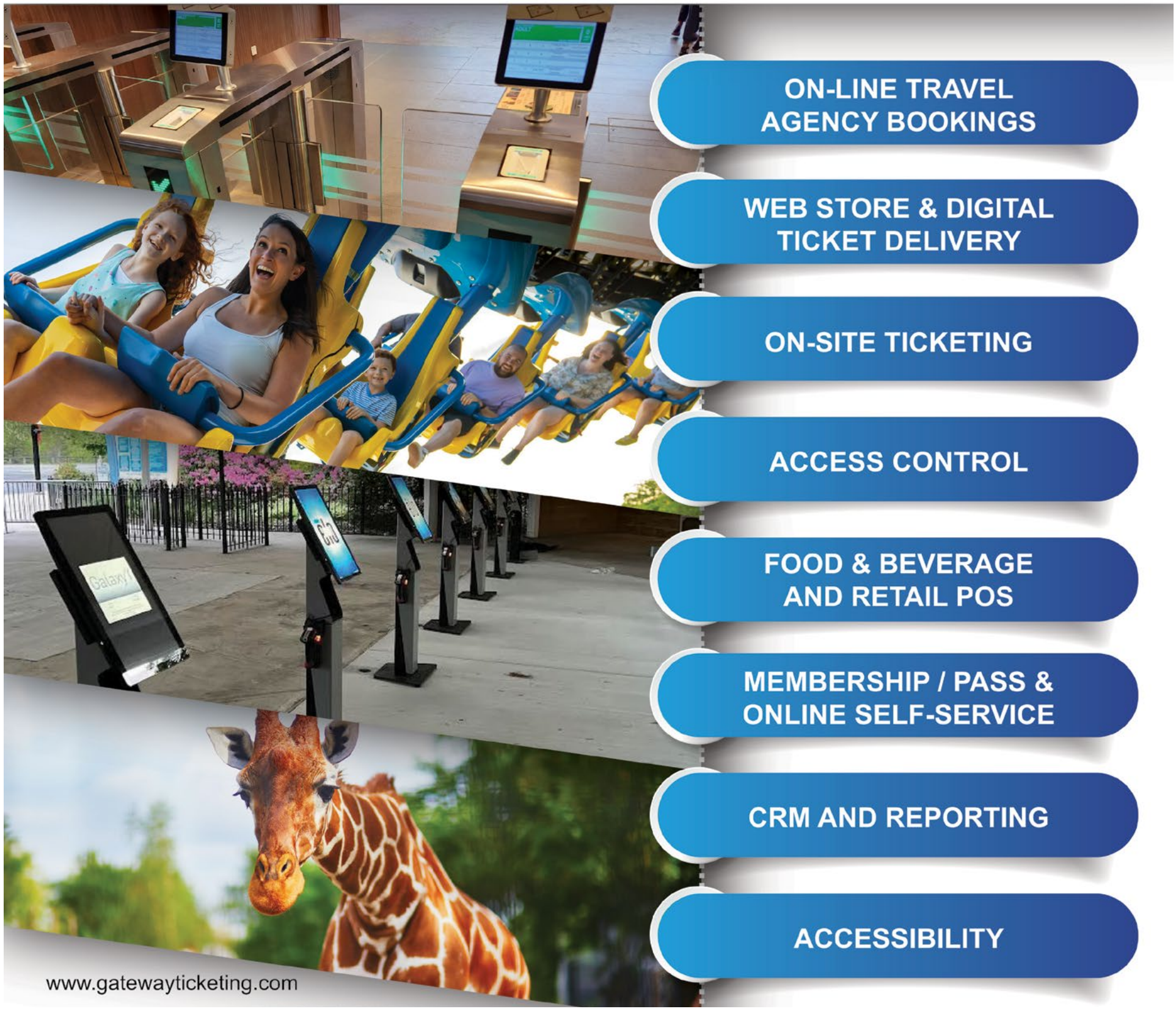

COURTESY AREA15

John Wick Experience coming to Las Vegas's Area15 later this year

LAS VEGAS — **Lionsgate** has teamed up with the Las Vegas tourist attraction **Area15** to create the **John Wick Experience**, which will open later in 2024.

The attraction will span approximately 12,000-square-feet in a space that blends immersive theater with highly themed cinematic environments to create an interactive journey that allows guests to live out life as a copycat of the iconic **Keanu Reeves** character on a high-stakes adventure.

Fans of the billion-dollar franchise will find themselves transported into the underworld of the films from the moment they step through the doors of the Las Vegas Continental, where they will have the opportunity to kick back in a themed bar, drop coins on merchandise and interact with sets.

Franchise director **Chad Stahelski** and the team at **87Eleven Entertainment** collaborated on the project to craft a fully immersive experience" with **Egan Productions**.

Katapult creates Care Bear FEC concept

DERBY, U.K. — International themed attraction design company, Katapult, has partnered with children's entertainment studio, Cloudco Entertainment, to create a new Care Bears family entertainment center concept. The attraction is a ticketed play cafe experience where guests can explore a range of themed zones before enjoying a super sweet Care Bears treat. Aimed at the ever-growing 'tweens' market who love cute, sweet and colorful, it's a place where caring is cool and sharing amplifies the experience. Speaking about the experience, Katapult's Chief Creative Officer Phil Higgins, said: "The new family entertainment center has been designed to create a memorable, fun and heartfelt experience where guests can indulge in the most delicious sweet treats. As fans of Care Bears ourselves, we are excited to take this concept to market to interested operators, investors and real estate owners around the world." COURTESY KATAPULT

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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Betson Enterprises announced the completion of a 20-piece game room installation as part of **Pizza Ranch & FunZone Arcade Detroit Lakes**.

Betson regional sales director **Ron Hunt** prepared a unique game room design and layout for the Pizza Ranch & FunZone to optimize for the local market. The FunZone boasts various redemption and video arcade titles, including Carnival Wheel, ICE Ball FX, Jurassic Park Arcade, Prize Time and Spider-Man Coin Pusher.

"Ron and the team at Betson are great to work with," said **Nick Price**, owner of Pizza Ranch Detroit Lakes. "They offer a concept-to-completion experience that allows us to create unmatched FunZone experiences."

"We are thrilled to partner with Pizza Ranch to create another FunZone experience, said Ron Hunt. "Nick and his team are doing tremendous work creating experiences that families can enjoy."

•

At the 2024 Amusement Expo International, **Intercard** featured its iQ readers and kiosks that read QR codes, maintaining the company's high standard for unattended amusement center payment technology. iQ devices use built-in scanners to read customer presented QR codes for payment and redemption point collection. This will enable customers to use mobile devices or paper receipts instead of play cards to activate games, reducing costs for route operators and owners of unattended arcades.

"With the iQ platform, customers can purchase or recharge game play and use a mobile device or paper receipt with a QR code to play games, collect points and even redeem prizes," said **Scott Sherrod**, CEO of Intercard, "all without the help of a center employee. It's a big step into the future for route operators and owners of unattended arcades."

•

Altitude Trampoline Park announced that it has started 2024 with nine deal signings to expand its presence in Illinois, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. Since the start of the year, the brand has launched three new park locations and has an additional nine units leased and under construction, expanding its presence throughout Alabama, California, Illinois and Texas. This will result in double-digit growth for the brand this year.

"Kicking off 2024 with nine franchise agreements, three park openings, and nine more in development sets Altitude on a robust growth trajectory for the year. Our expansion is gaining significant momentum as we extend our reach across the nation," said **Mike Stout**, vice president of franchise development at Altitude Trampoline Park. "We're excited to witness several of our current franchisees expanding their footprint with Altitude and committing to multi-unit agreements for further growth. Our franchise owners demonstrate a profound enthusiasm for the brand and our mission to become a go-to destination for family-friendly fun."

Multi-unit operators, **Brandon** and **Kenda Gadish**, have partnered with franchisee **Ben Thomas** to open a park in the fast-growing Atlanta suburb of Austell, Georgia. The Gadish's opened their first Altitude Trampoline Park in Spokane, Washington, before later taking over ownership of Altitude's Nashville, Tennessee, location. Thomas opened his first location in Huntsville, Alabama and second in Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Andre Carollo and **Grady Hinchman** recently opened their fourth Altitude Trampoline Park in Tampa, Florida. In 2019, Carollo and Hinchman opened their first park in Kissimmee, Florida, and later opened additional units in Sanford, Florida and Bradenton, Florida.

•

Elev8 Fun Sanford has won the **American Amusement Machine Association** (AAMA) Family Entertainment Center of the Year award at a ceremony held in Las Vegas, Nevada. The award comes on the heels of an annual competition in which entrants across the nation compete on a multitude of categories, including design/aesthetic, application forms, customer service, secret shopping and more. **David Goldfarb**, managing partner of Elev8 Fun, accepted the award on behalf of the company.

At press time, Goldfarb commented: "I am very honored to receive this award on behalf of the entire Elev8 Organization. This is a testament to the product and service our team members continue to deliver. Without them, there would be no Elev8."

This iteration of the award, is the second in Goldfarb's portfolio, as **Xtreme Action Park** won the same award in 2019.

"This award keeps motivating us in delivering and maintaining the standards that have become cornerstones in our business," said Goldfarb.

•

Family Entertainment Group (FEG) announced the addition of **Gregory Bacorn** to its team as an account executive. With years of experience in the entertainment industry, Bacorn joins FEG with a wealth of knowledge and a passion for driving growth through strategic partnerships.

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MIDWAY

Florida State Fair numbers down due to final weekend washout

AT: *B. Derek Shaw*
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Wade Shows as midway manager coordinated 89 rides for the 12-day Florida State Fair. COURTESY FLORIDA STATE FAIR

One of the new rides at the Florida State Fair this year was Tesla, (second generation Tivoli/AM Tech Orbitor) brought in by Powers Great American Midways. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

TAMPA, Fla. – "Severe weather on the final weekend resulted in early closure and limited operating hours with significant impact on final attendance and revenue in what would have otherwise been a record year," explained **Cheryl F. Flood**, CEO, **Florida State Fair**. The last weekend of the 120th edition was primarily a washout. Final attendance came in at 338,499, well below expected numbers.

There was an integrated media campaign themed around the 2024 key message: "Smile Together."

Wade Shows again had the midway contract bringing in 89 rides, with 22 located in Kiddie Land, 80 games, 32 food stands and 15 direct sales. **Frank Zaitshik**, owner, also worked with **Powers Great American Midways**, **Iconic Attractions**, **Dreamland Amusements, Biggest Wheel, LLC, Wood Entertainment Company**, and **Sue Shorb** (**Wonderland Amusements**) to supplement the ride package.

"The Florida State Fair always goes wonderfully," said Zaitshik. "The things we look at mostly (besides safety, of course) nowadays is ride capacity and the amount of trailers it takes to move over the road. Now more than ever, folks (carnival operators) have to look at economizing everywhere they can, and transportation is a big way they can. But by the same token, you have to have enough equipment there and enough equipment with capacity to satisfy demand. That's what all carnivals are struggling with and solving right now."

Zaitshik noted rides that were at the Florida State Fair for the first time: "There's not as many as one would think, because we had an awful lot of new rides last year. This year we were scheduled to have several more but were disappointed because of building delays, shipping delays and things like that. This year we have **Corky Powers**' new Tesla ride, which is an Orbiter-like ride. We had several kiddie rides that are new here but not necessarily new to the industry."

The top three most popular rides included the Super Slide (**SBF-VISA Group** performance slide); Sky Glider sky ride and the 155-foot Midway Sky Eye (**Lamberink**) owned by **Michael Wood**. The first two are both owned by the Florida State Fair.

"Wade Shows has been the midway provider at the Florida State Fair for many years. His (Zaitshik) excellence and pride in our midway are unmatched. I'm thankful for the continued partnership we have shared with him and his team for years," said Flood.

"Cheryl is a very, very, very passionate manager. She's done great wonders with this fair, along with her staff," said Zaitshik. "You know there's been some changes in staff that kind of fit her needs and her personality. It's a win for the customers and a win for people in general. I've had more people come to me this year and compliment me, not for Wade Shows in particular, but just the overall look of the fair and some of the things she is trying to do. Hats off to her. She has the number one asset that you can't buy or you can't make up if you don't have it, and that is a passion for what you do."

Another in the Zaitshik family is also in the industry and on the midway, as Frank explains. "My youngest daughter and her husband (**Iconic Midway Rides**) had the Infinity (**Larson**) here, which was brand new last year. They also had a **Zamperla** Beach Shack (kiddie ride) that looked brand new. The ride they were not able to show is the **KMG**-built XXL. It's 80 feet tall but swings to 147 feet. In perspective, the Biggest Wheel (Sky Eye) is 155 feet tall, so it swings within eight feet of that at its highest point. So, it's going to be quite exciting. It's booked in a number of independent fairs. It's booked with us as well. While they're not following exactly the business plan that Michael (Wood) and I did with the Biggest Wheel, they're playing a combination of Wade Show locations and independent fairs. I think they are going to be wildly successful with that. Behind that, they have come in [with] a Lamberink swing tower that's 175 feet. That's going to be the big boy of all of them, and that particular ride has a great capacity of 34 people. We're expecting great things from them and us, over the next few years."

Flood noted a distinction of this fair: "The Florida State Fair has the largest, clean energy midway in the country and offers more live shows and performances than any other fair nationwide. We also offer free parking and all of our entertainment is included with the

▸ **See FLORIDA, page 26**

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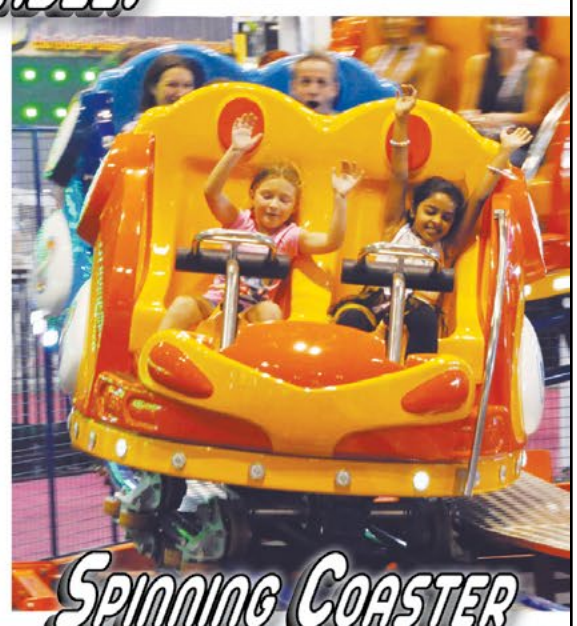

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MIDWAY

Midway provider Inners Shows finds gratification in still dates

OXFORD, N.C. — **Donna Inners** is quite content playing still dates with her 20-plus rides and handful of concessions.

Amusement Today caught up with the Franklinton, N.C., owner of **Inners Shows** during a 10-day (June 23-July 2, 2023) stand promoted as **Oxford Family Days**.

"That's basically all we play," Inners said of the carnival's March-October route which covers mostly parking lot dates — an exception being the **Clayton** (N.C.) **Harvest Festival** in late October.

"We do quite well with these (plaza) events," she noted, while watching a Saturday afternoon crowd lineup at the ticket booths.

Donna has been sole owner of the carnival since the 2018 death of her husband, **Edward Inners Jr.**, who was killed when struck by a car while crossing a road.

Following her husband's passing, she contemplated selling the business but, instead, took the reigns and forged on.

She attributes much of the continued success of the carnival to seasoned showman **David Shoup** — her right hand in much of the operation.

"He helps line up locations, does our publicity and lays out the lots," said Inners. During the off-season, Shoup refurbishes some equipment in his Florida shop while the rest of the show winters in Franklinton.

The carnival has a storied history, dating back to 1909. Edward's grandfather, **Frances Inners**, founded **Inners Amusement Co**. in York, Pa. Edward's father, Ed Sr., helped run the carnival until his death in 1997.

The Wadkins Expo Wheel (above left) was a standout on Inners Shows during a still date in Oxford, N.C., and Sizzler (above middle) was among the popular thrill rides offered. Another highlight was the new A.R.M. Rock Star. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

The family ran two units covering seven Eastern states but scaled back to one show following Edward Jr.'s death.

Today, the carnival services locations in Virginia and North and South Carolina, with some of the rides and trucks still carrying the logo "Inners Shows, York, Pa."

The show heavily uses Facebook promotions to pump-up still date business. Calling itself "**Magic Midways**," the ads prompt users to a website where discount ride and food coupons may be downloaded and printed for redemption. The site also offers chances to enter to win ride tickets and all-day wristbands.

The layout in Oxford featured a good selection of rides for young and old, including some classic as well as new attractions.

Inners recently took delivery of a new Rock Star from **A.R.M.** of Wintersville, Ohio, which was located just past the ticket booths. At the other end of the midway was an A.R.M. Super Shot drop tower. The other spectacular offered was Extreme from **KMG** of the Netherlands.

Some classics from yesteryear included Sidewinder (**Eyerly Aircraft**), Scat (**Venture**), and a glass house.

—Ron Gustafson

FLORIDA
Continued from page 24

price of admission."

Special promotions included Heroes Day and Super Savings Sunday with free admission for law enforcement, first responders, active or retired military, veterans, doctors, nurses, hospital and emergency clinic staff with valid ID. $3 Thursday for rides, games and food items after 3:00 p.m. was another promotion along with Family Day, when youth 17 years of age or younger received free admission to the fair until 6 p.m. with a paid parent or guardian, 21 years of age or older with a valid ID. Finally, there were Senior Days, any Monday to Friday of the fair where admission was $11 for seniors 55 and up.

The Florida State Fair operates with a $550,000 advertising budget, broken down with print accounting for 4.5%, broadcast 36%, out-of-home (OOH) 25%, digital direct advertising 27% and social/digital content 7.5%.

Fan favorite foods from throughout the 163 fair-managed food stands included chocolate-dipped strawberry iced tea, fried Spam grilled cheese (best savory food) and banana cream pie funnel cake (best sweet food). Other interesting culinary delights were Pop Rock pickles; BBQ fried burritos; poutine burgers; strawberry shortcake kebab; spicy Korean corndog; lemonade funnel cake; bacon, caramel and peanut butter apple fries; Jalapeño lemonade; bacon waffle cheeseburger; cheddar pickle crunch pizza and banana cream pie nachos.

The Florida State Fair enjoyed record-setting advance ticket sales, along with a significant decrease in ejections, arrests and related issues as a result of a youth admissions policy and enhanced security policies and presence. A new mascot, "Sunny," was introduced, and fireworks returned on weekends. A first Friday grove party with silent disco, beverage sampling and pop-up market were introduced. A second Heroes' Day promotion was added. A three-day Secret Walls live mural competition, authentic 3D chalk art and "You Are Here" Florida wildlife corridor traveling exhibit were all added. A new hologram theatre and movie in the Florida agriculture hall of fame building along with an interactive "Thank a Farmer" experience in collaboration with the **Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services** rounded out first-time experiences.

The fair offered over 40 entertainment options this year, all free with the price of admission. A national headliner concert was held on the first Saturday with **Tigerlily Gold**.

"I'm very proud of our team and their teamwork in hosting one of the best state fairs in our 120-year history," said Flood. "We have made a lot of changes over the years. Progress is being made, and we look forward to the future improving year over year with new and creative patron-focused ideas. We are most thankful for all our emergency management partners, business entities such as midway, concessionaires, exhibitors, vendors and corporate/sponsorships that make the Florida State Fair a wonderful event for all to enjoy. Despite the two days of rain on our busiest weekend, we had many records and much success to celebrate."

The 2025 edition takes place February 6-17.

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Seen during the 2024 IISF Trade Show

Seen here is the entrance to the Super Trade Show & Extravaganza in Riverview, Florida. Most attendees refer to it as 'Gibtown,' slang for the adjourning town, Gibsonton. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

The Christmas Tree Ride brought in by Equipment Solutions International drew a great deal of interest but was not sold. There is a possible arrangement for it to be part of the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo this coming Christmas season. It is manufactured by Italian company, Park Rides Lamborghini. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Classic Toy's Ira Feuer and Marlene Mercer took a moment at the Gibtown show to pose in front this blue dragon plush, the most popular item with parks and carnivals. AT/GARY SLADE

Fredericksen Industries had a pair of fun slides on display. They looked especially nice during the evening when manufacturers kept the lights on to show buyers. Both pieces have been sold. COURTESY OF STEFAN HINZ

This 10-sweep Mangels Fire Truck ride owned by Dreamland Amusements was recently refurbished by Dalton Kid Rides Rebuilders, drawing quite a bit of midway attention from attendees. COURTESY OF STEFAN HINZ

Showmen's Museum expands, readies for leadership change

Jim Frederiksen

RIVERVIEW, Fla. — During the **IISF** Super Trade Show & Extravaganza, the **International Independent Showmen's Museum** announced a major enlargement project and the retirement of its long-standing curator, **David "Doc" Rivera**.

The museum that preserves the heritage of the traveling show in early America is about to nearly double its size. "The museum has come along so well in the last 12 years, we're ready to expand [by] adding another 17,000 square feet," said **Jim Frederiksen**, emeritus board member of the **International Independent Showmen's Museum Corporation**. The permitting process has begun.

The expansion will be an addition to the rear of the existing building. "It's mostly for the bigger stuff, the circus wagons [and] railroad trailer roof wagons from the carnival industry," said Frederiksen. Monies for the million-dollar project outlay has come directly from Frederiksen, who donated an equal amount to build the original building in 2010.

On Wednesday evening during the show, a steak dinner and jamboree fundraiser and auction for the museum building fund was the most attended fundraiser in the history of the Riverview club. Over 450 dinners were sold, and more than 150 items were auctioned, raising over $60,500 for the cause. On the museum Facebook page the next day, it said, "To simply say 'Thank You' to everyone who was so instrumental in achieving this tremendous milestone seems somehow sadly inadequate. But as we say in showbiz, 'Until you're better dressed, THANK YOU!'"

The museum curator, since inception, has been "Doc" Rivera, who also serves as the executive director. With his upcoming retirement, "We have to find a new curator. It's a national search and the salary is negotiable," said Frederiksen.

Upon the hiring of a replacement, hours will change. "It's been a hobby for the last 12 years, only open on weekends. We're ready to open it now and run it as a professional destination museum attraction," said Frederiksen. "Everybody who has been there just loves it and is so happy. Anybody that has been in the amusement industry from the circus to the carnivals, really appreciates that museum and it's a good legacy for our industry."

The museum contains all types of carnival, circus, wild west shows and other artifacts. It currently is open every Saturday and Sunday from 12 to 5 p.m. and at other times by appointment.

•showmensmuseum.org

AT/B. DEREK SHAW

MIDWAYSCENE

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The **Erie County Fair**, Hamburg, New York, is right in the path of the four-minute April 8th mid-afternoon solar eclipse. They created an event called, "Total-ity Fun at the Fairgrounds." This ticketed viewing party running from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., priced at $50, is good for an entire carload and includes paved parking, certified viewing glasses, access to portable restrooms, live music by **Hit N Run**, kids craft, food and beverage vendors. There will also be a kids craft and activity area.

It is estimated that an additional one million people will be added to the western New York region to experience the event. Hotel/motel rooms have been sold out a year in advance. The partial eclipse will start at 2:04 p.m. Eastern and last until 4:32 p.m. Eastern, with pure totality taking place at 3:20 pm. "It's such a one-off. We don't know what to expect," said **Jessica Underberg**, CEO. "We are going to prepare like a three-day snow storm. There is nothing to compare it to. It's like planning for a moving target."

The next total solar eclipse in the United States will not happen until 2044.

The Erie County Fair returns August 7-18 with **Strates Shows** providing the midway fun. This will be the 100th time playing that spot, believed to be the longest running fair-carnival partnership in the country.

International Association of Fairs & Expositions (IAFE) member fairs/fairgrounds planning a solar eclipse watch event include **Fair Park** (the site of the **State Fair of Texas**,) Dallas; **Indiana State Fairgrounds**, Indianapolis; **Mercer County Fair**, Celina, Ohio; **Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds**, Middleburg Heights, Ohio; **Wayne County Fair**, Palmyra, New York; **Lewis County Fair**, Lowville, New York and others.

•

Terri Seltzer is back again as fair manager of the **Jackson County Fair** (Maquoketa, Iowa). She left at the end of November last year when **Sawyer Enders** was selected for the position. Enders decided the fit wasn't right for her, so she stepped down at the end of February, after just three months at the helm.

Seltzer, a retired 37-year educator in the area, wanted more time with her three daughters and six grandchildren. The board worked with her, modifying the return hours to allow for that time.

The 2023 fair was the 21st one she has worked in some capacity. "My family has grown up with the fair. They have enjoyed it all. I like the people, the organization, all aspects," said Seltzer. The newly built fair and **Iowa State University Extension** building known as Together We Build Outreach Center is a priority for Seltzer. Her goal is to get the 2,400-square-foot rental portion used as much as possible. The local **4-H** organization is located in another portion of the building.

The fairgrounds are quite busy with numerous rentals and other activities. Seltzer said, "We don't have a free weekend until next January."

This is the 170th year a fair has been held in Jackson County. The 75th annual fair, on this site, returns July 21-29 with **Evans United Shows** handling the rides. "We love working with them. They have been here a very long time. We have a fabulous relationship with them," said Seltzer.

•

The **East Texas State Fair** finally has a new place to call home, since the city of Tyler, Texas, ended its lease agreement August 9, 2023. The fair had been operating in the parking lot of **W.T. Brookshire Conference Center** in Tyler.

The new location for the fair is **Park of East Texas**, a newly developed site on State Highway 64 near the **Walmart** that will expand to Patton Lane (County Road 1135) and reaches State Highway 31.

The fair is used for charitable and educational purposes through the annual event that provides education, entertainment and the spirit of competition. The fair have awarded over $1.2 million in scholarships since 1992. "Our mission is also to create commerce for Tyler and Smith County by providing venues for others to utilize and by drawing participants to the complex," the fair website reads.

The fair is set for September 20-29 with **North American Midway Entertainment** providing the thrills.

•

Various member fairs of the IAFE throughout the United States and Canada gather to attend their respective zone's meeting. This meeting provides networking opportunities, workshops and insights that are beyond state boundaries, however still within a specific region.

Many meetings have already taken place, however there are still three that take place soon. Zone 1 (the northeast) will be held May 16-18 at **Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel**, Springfield, Massachusetts, while Zone 2 (the southeast) takes place on the same dates during the **Florida Federation of Fairs** annual convention at the **Caribe Royale Resort**, Orlando. Finally, Zone 6 (deep south) takes place April 4-6 at the **Franklin Marriott Cool Springs**, Franklin, Tennessee.

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▸Fårup Sommerland expanding water park — page 32 / News Splash — page 32

Massanutten Resort announces major water park expansion, hotel

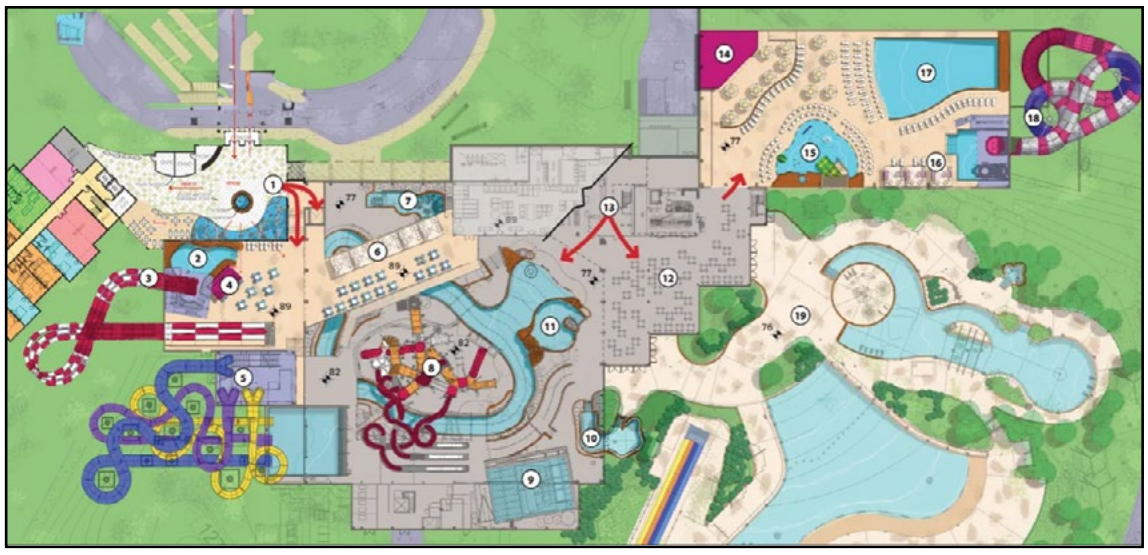
AT: *Jeffrey Seifert*
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

MASSANUTTEN, Va. — One of the East Coast's premier all-season resort destinations, **Massanutten Resort**, has announced a water park expansion and a new 144-room, five-story hotel. The new hotel will feature flexible accommodations designed to cater to families and business travelers alike with king rooms and double queen rooms, along with themed king bunk rooms and two- and three-bedroom suites. A 6,500-square-foot atrium will connect the new hotel to the existing **Massanutten Indoor WaterPark** for seamless guest access. The 6,000-acre resort has multiple lodging options including places to stay on the mountain at the ski resort, facilities in the valley near the water park, and numerous adjoining condominiums.

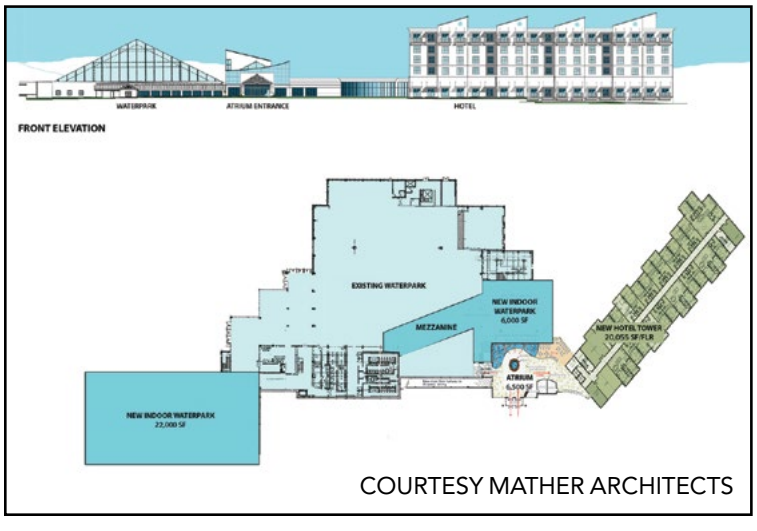
The new hotel will include a spacious patio, board room, 2,600-square-foot flexible event space, and state-of-the-art fitness center with the latest exercise equipment. The resort will also expand its parking facilities, adding nearly 300 additional parking spots, bringing the total to 717. Guests will enter the new atrium and be greeted by cascading waterfalls, a welcoming environment with comfortable seating, and massive glass walls with views of the indoor water park. The atrium and hotel public areas will serve as vibrant activity hubs, with a bar and breakfast area. The new hotel will be the first to be physically attached to the indoor and outdoor water parks.

The resort is making plans for two expansions to its water park building. Along with the aforementioned atrium connecting the new hotel property, the indoor water park will be expanded by an additional 6,000 square-foot connector to the atrium along with a 22,000-square-foot new building. Specific attractions have yet to be finalized, but plans include a wave pool, family raft slide, three-lane headfirst mat racer slide, adult pool, bar, cabanas, multi-level water play structure, and a kiddie pool with kiddie slides. As is typical of indoor water parks, the new slides will start and end indoors, but the bulk of the fiberglass will be outside of the structure. Illustrations show the mat racer having enclosed tubes that diverge onto separate paths but meet in the center, split apart again, and then meet at the end for an exciting finish. The entire family raft ride will be enclosed from start to finish and feature light and sound enhancements to create a cosmic slide experience.

"We are excited to embark on a transformative journey that will truly redefine the guest experience at Massanutten Resort," remarked **Steve Krohn**, president and chief executive officer of the **Resorts Companies**. "Our commitment to providing unparalleled hospitality experiences remains unwavering, and this expansion underscores our dedication to innovation and guest satisfaction."



This aerial views show what the hotel and indoor water park will look like when completed in 2025/2026. COURTESY MATHER ARCHITECTS



COURTESY MATHER ARCHITECTS

Construction is expected to start this spring with an anticipated completion date of late 2025 or early 2026. The expansion comes partly out of necessity as the existing lodging options are often fully booked. The new five-story hotel should help the resort operations team manage capacity by reducing sell-out dates and allowing them to offer opportunities for larger groups to enjoy quality time together.

"We are excited for Massanutten Resort and our community as we all embark on this exciting expansion project," stated **Joel Hensley**, District 5 supervisor for the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors. "With the involvement of local contractors, **Harmon Construction** and **Mather Architects**, this development not only enhances our region's tourism appeal but also exemplifies our commitment to fostering economic growth and opportunity within our community."

Massanutten Resort is located just minutes from **Shenandoah National Park** and Skyline Drive. The area draws visitors from Washington, DC; Baltimore, Maryland; and Richmond, Virginia. Massanutten has a long history of attracting tourists, but it has had its share of ups and downs and has even had to endure a bankruptcy. The first resort opened in 1875 as a health resort known as **Rockingham Springs** taking advantage of the area's five natural springs. They were advertised to have "restorative powers." After about 40 years of operation, Rockingham Springs fell into disrepair and closed. It remained mostly unused until the late 1960s, when attempts were made to reacquire land that had been parceled off and build a resort. A ski lodge was constructed in 1972 and six ski slopes were opened in 1973. An outdoor pool was added along with tennis courts, and the four-season resort was starting to take shape. Today, Massanutten Village is a thriving four-season resort and community of more than 1,000 single-family homes, 1,300 timesharing units, and a multi-million-dollar ski business.

The new hotel and indoor water park expansion are part of a 15 to 20-year master plan for the resort to expand its facilities. Plans include a five-mile-long, multi-use trail; workforce housing units; additional residential units including single-family detached, duplexes, rowhouses and apartments; along with a senior living active adult 55+ planned community.

WATER PARK MAINTENANCE:

Tips to Avoid the Things We've Seen

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Two new slides will make their way to the Aquapark at Fårup Sommerland.
COURTESY FÅRUP SOMMERLAND

Major expansion coming to Denmark's Aquapark

AT: *Jeffrey Seifert*
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

BLOKHUS, Denmark — The **Aquapark** at **Fårup Sommerland**, Denmark's largest water park, is getting even bigger. A major expansion in 2024 will add two of the highest waterslides in Denmark, a new children's water park and new changing facilities.

Two of the new water slides will be both higher and longer than anything else in Denmark with heights of 18 and 21 meters (59 and 69 feet) respectively and lengths of 172 and 195 meters (564 and 640 feet). One of the slides will combine a tailspin element and a Boomerango element, making it the first in the world to combine these two elements. In addition to the two new slides, the children's water park is also being expanded with a larger pool and three new water slides.

"The Aquapark is without a doubt one of the biggest draws in Fårup Sommerland during the summer months, and therefore we also have high expectations for the massive upgrade we are making to our water park [at the end of] the 2024 season," said **Niels Jørgen Jensen**, director of Fårup Sommerland.

Along with the expansion, the park is investing in a thorough renovation and upgrade of the existing infrastructure. The changing facilities will be completely renovated and expanded in order to handle additional capacity. The existing slides are getting recoated and the water purification system will be updated.

"This is the largest investment and renovation in the Aquapark's lifetime, where we have focused on creating new activities for both young and old. In addition to larger pools, larger slides and better facilities around the water activities, we will also upgrade the infrastructure in the Aquapark. This applies, among other things, to coating and water purification systems, so our guests from 2024 will experience a water park in a completely new version and scale all around," said Jensen.

"We know that this kind of investment pays off," he added. "We saw this, among other things, last season, when we made the biggest investment ever in Fårup Sommerland with the Fønix ride. It has created unprecedented attention at home and abroad, and it emphasizes that it is with investments like these that we can continue to offer Danish and foreign guests a strong product that benefits both ourselves and Danish tourism as a whole."

The renovation and expansion of the Aquapark will begin when the summer season in Fårup Sommerland comes to an end in September. The amusement park opens its doors for 2025 season at the end of April, while the Aquapark itself traditionally opens June 1.

NEWSSPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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Shipwreck Island in Panama City, Florida, is partnering with Houston-based **Pyek Group** to help oversee the management of the water park, including staffing, operations, marketing and other areas.

The Pyek group was formed in 2021 from the management team at **Typhoon Texas** in Katy (a suburb of Houston). It includes the original three founders, all graduates of **Texas A&M University**, who decided to build a water park which opened in 2016 as Typhoon Texas.

Possessing good business acumen, but knowing very little about running a water park, the trio hired highly-qualified and experienced water park managers to serve as consultants and to run the park.

Following the success of the original in Katy, the three founders acquired a Hawaiian Falls water park in north Austin the following year and renamed it Typhoon Texas.

In addition to the two Typhoon Texas parks, the Pyek Group manages two **Cowabunga Vegas** water parks in Nevada.

•

The **Riverside Family Aquatic Center** in Moline, Illinois, is getting ready to reopen following a $6.8 million project. The modernization project, which started in April of last year, kept the facility closed for more than a year.

The upgraded facility will open with a new name — **Riverside Riverslide**. Updates to the facility included three new waterslides, a lazy river, a splash pad, new shade structures, updated concessions, nighttime lights, a shared park shelter, and family rest rooms.

The City of Moline Parks and Recreation Department, which owns and runs the facility, maintains a partnership with **Two Rivers YMCA**. Members of the YMCA will have full access to the improved Riverside Riverslide complex as part of their membership with no additional cost.

•

In February, the City Council of Northport, Alabama, approved the first step toward an ambitious $350 million water park, with plans that include a lake, hotels, water park and even rentable private islands.

The council approved entering into an agreement with a Texas developer to build a $350 million **Crystal Lagoon** lake and water park. Amenities at the facility include a sand beach, a waterfall, five slides, and a floating obstacle course, along with paddleboard and kayak rentals.

The Crystal Lagoon is the first phase of the project. The developer is planning to acquire another 85.61 adjacent acres.

Eventually, the project would encompass 10,000 square feet of indoor dining, a concert venue, two hotels, restaurant and retail space. There would also be 64 single-family residences surrounding the development.

•

The newest Great Wolf Lodge in Naples, Florida, has announced that it will make its debut on September 25, 2024. It will become the 21st resort in the **Great Wolf Resorts** family.

As part of its grand opening celebration, the lodge is booking rooms now at 30% off for a limited time for stays from September 25, 2024, through January 2, 2025.

"Anything can happen with construction, but we feel really strongly about that date being open and welcoming our first families," said **Jason Bays**, general manager of **Great Wolf Lodge South Florida**, which is the name the company has given the Naples lodge.

The $250 million resort includes 500 themed suites, a 92,000-square-foot indoor water park, along with an activity center, convention space and meeting rooms.

The activity center includes many of the attractions that Great Wolf has become famous for, including MagiQuest, Oliver's Mining Co, Ten Paw Alley short-lane bowling, Howlers Peak ropes course, Northern Lights arcade and Howl in One mini golf.

•

Toronto's only city water park is getting a facelift with multiple pools and waterslides. **L'Amoreaux Kidstown Water Park**, the only water park operated by the city, is currently home to a splash pad, wading pool and tipping bucket.

The site is set to undergo a redesign and replacement to become bigger, better and more appealing to wider age groups.

New additions include a large spiral waterslide, a waterfall installation with indigenous theming, a new lookout platform above the waterfall, wading and leisure pools, a water tunnel, designated spaces for birthdays and events, and more.

There will also be designated junior and senior splash pads, along with cognitive areas for the youngest visitors and full accessibility features throughout.

The park will be closed during the 2024 season, but should reopen in 2025.

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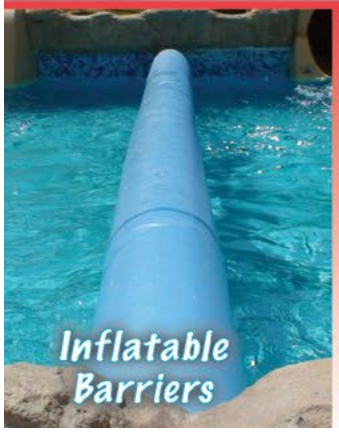
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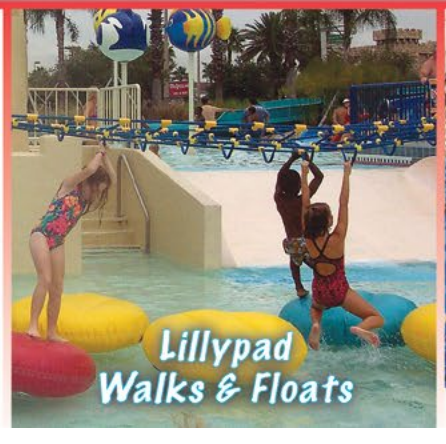
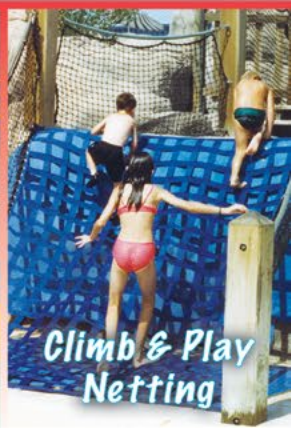

Lillypad Walks & Floats


Climb & Play Netting

BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

Six Flags's Savannah Sunset Resort opens reservations — page 37 / Chocolatetown USA hosts PAPA — page 39

Altitude Attractions looks toward the future with new rides to offer

AT: *Pam Sherborne*
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

LOGAN, Utah — **Altitude Attractions** is building its ride arsenal one ride at a time, and the results have been very positive for the family-owned operation.

Currently, the company is focusing on its Soaring Eagle Zipline ride and its newer Hammered ride. The two-seat Soaring Eagle was its main focus until the company highlighted the two-seat and six-seat Hammered park model to the industry at **IAAPA** Expo 2021. The company exhibited in 2022 and won IAAPA's Brass Ring Award for Best New Ride that year.

Last fall, at the 2024 IAAPA Expo, Altitude Attractions introduced a four-seat Soaring Eagle and a portable Hammered model, which can have either two seats or six.

The new portable Hammered is a one-trailer ride (above) that can be set up in about 35 minutes. It comes with either two seats (right) or six seats.
COURTESY ALTITUDE ATTRACTIONS; AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Altitude Attractions debuted its four-seater Soaring Eagle Attraction last November at IAAPA Expo 2023.
COURTESY ALTITUDE ATTRACTIONS

"Our business has really been going exceptionally well," said **Jayden Wallentine,** Altitude Attraction's director of sales and business development. "We have a four-seat Soaring Eagle at **Morgan's Wonderland,** San Antonio, Texas, with a couple more going in but the locations haven't been released as yet."

There are about 80 locations of the two-seat Soaring Eagle worldwide.

The newest ride, Hammered, is an interactive ride combining two popular attractions, the drop tower and the High Striker, found at amusement parks and carnivals everywhere.

It offers 10 different rider-chosen modes and allows riders to choose modes ranging from a kid-friendly half bounce to intense and invigorating chaos. Half bounce is a gentle ride, whereas chaos and the other more aggressive modes are crazily active.

Plus, there's the option for onlookers to swing a high-striker hammer at a target and send the ride soaring up to the appropriate height on the scale.

Fun sound effects round out the package on the magnetically braked ride.

Hammered has a standard height of 30 feet but can conveniently be customed down to 20 feet if needed to fit indoors.

Wallentine said the park-model Hammered has been doing quite well in amusement parks and family entertainment centers since it was introduced.

The one-trailer portable model introduced last fall is also doing well. The company introduced it at the IAAPA Expo in the fall, then exhibited it at the **International Independent Showmen's Foundation** (IISF) trade show in Gibsonton, Florida, in early February.

"We have one portable model at **Fun Crew USA** in Orlando, Florida," Wallentine said. "A couple of others have been purchased but not announced."

Wallentine said that the park-model Hammered and its mobile counterpart have some of the same parts, of course, but one ride can't be converted into another.

The portable model stays on the trailer. To set up, the arms swing out and the base stands up and "you are ready to roll."

"It takes about 35 minutes to set it up," he said.

Altitude Attractions

See ALTITUDE, page 36

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A four-seat Soaring Eagle — similar to the above model — recently debuted at Morgan's Wonderland in San Antonio, Texas. COURTESY ALTITUDE ATTRACTIONS

ALTITUDE

Continued from page 34

and **Rides 4 U** announced during the IISF trade show this year a collaboration on a new ride concept called Rock and Roll. According to **Len Soled**, Rides 4 U, the ride is still in production, and they are hoping to have a prototype in the next two to three months.

"We will soon be releasing it in its entirety," Soled said.

Altitude Attractions was co-founded by former **S&S Power** (later **S&S Worldwide**) founder **Stan Checketts** and originally specialized in the **Soaring Eagle Zipline** attraction. It was started in 2010.

The company was renamed Altitude Rides and Attractions from Soaring Eagle Zipline in 2021 after it was purchased by current president **Logan Checketts**.

•altitudeattractions.com

Hersheypark announces new seats and restraints for Skyrush

HERSEHY, Pa. — **Hersheypark** upgraded the Skyrush roller coaster flight experience to first class with all-new seats and restraints. Passengers will now board Skyrush from a reimagined station platform featuring an all-new paint scheme, lighting effects and custom soundscape. The investment in the high-thrill attraction will provide coaster lovers with added comfort while experiencing the adrenaline rush they know and crave.

The new Skyrush upgrades were scheduled to be available when the largest amusement park in Pennsylvania opened for its 118th operating year on March 29. Weather permitting, Skyrush is open for spring weekends, summer and the Hersheypark Halloween seasonal event.

One of 14 coasters at Hersheypark, Skyrush climbs 200 feet into the air before flying downhill at 75 mph as it heads into four high-speed turns and five zero-G airtime hills for a thrilling ride experience.

Hersheypark's investment in Skyrush will provide guests with added comfort while experiencing the ride's definitive adrenaline rush. COURTESY HERSHEYPARK

Skyrush's upgrades include new seats and restraints for enhanced rider comfort. COURTESY HERSHEYPARK

Hersheypark guests will board Skyrush from a reimagined station platform featuring an all-new paint scheme, lighting effects and custom soundscape. COURTESY HERSHEYPARK

Six Flags Great Adventure opening new Savannah Sunset Resort

Guests offered luxurious views of Wild Safari animals

AT: *Pam Sherborne*
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson, New Jersey, will open its new Savannah Sunset Resort and Spa on June 14, where guests will be able to immerse themselves into Six Flags Great Adventure Wild Safari. Guests will stay at luxurious glamping accommodations and be able to wake up to free-roaming exotic animals.
COURTESY SIX FLAGS GREAT ADVENTURE

JACKSON, N.J. — Guests staying at the new resort at **Six Flags Great Adventure** may awaken in the mornings not really feeling they are actually in New Jersey. In fact, they may feel they are in the middle of a wild safari, which will be exactly correct.

The new **Savannah Sunset Resort and Spa** will be located in the middle of Six Flags Great Adventure's Wild Safari area.

Park officials began taking reservations to stay at this new addition that will offer guests luxurious bedrooms with scenic views of free-roaming giraffes, oryxes, wildebeests and many other African species set to open June 14.

This addition elevates the park's already 350-acre safari available for visitors.

With the new resort, visitors will experience the 1,200-animal safari through an off-road guided tour and spend nights in a luxurious glamping experience.

The resort will include a spa and a fine-dining restaurant surrounded by wild exotic fauna. The guest rooms will look like tents resembling "authentic African lodges," said **Staci Wheeler,** Six Flags Great Adventure spokesperson.

It is the first of its kind within the Six Flags brand, Wheeler said.

"We will have a number of animals that freely roam around the enclosed campsite," she said.

During the nighttime, guests may enjoy outdoor games, a fire pit with nightly s'mores and an entertainment space for movies under the stars, music, animal encounters and lectures.

Key features of the Savannah Sunset Resort and Spa include:

•Plush and luxurious accommodations — The resort will offer 20 glamping suites that vary in size, sleeping two to six guests. Each suite is designed to provide comfort and style with world-class amenities.

•Unmatched views and VIP experiences — During their stay, guests may choose their own adventure. Whether relaxing with sweeping views from their suite, participating in close-up animal encounters or exploring the local watering holes of the Six Flags Great Adventure theme park or Hurricane Harbor water park, guests will have opportunities to create lifetime memories.

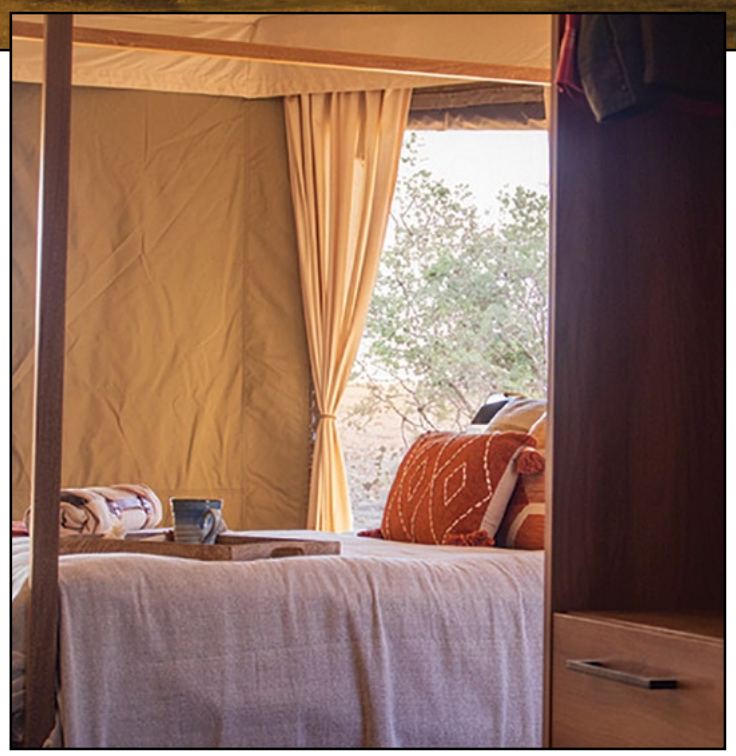
With a two-night minimum stay, guests will enjoy a giraffe feeding, daily breakfast, multi-park passes giving access to all three Six Flags Great Adventure Resort parks and more.

•VIP dining — Guests will embark on an indulgent culinary journey with featured items curated to enhance the glamping experience.

•Spa services — Guests may rejuvenate their senses at the Savannah Sunset Spa which features holistic treatments with expert therapists to promote relaxation and wellness.

•Event spaces — Ideal for small gatherings from weddings to corporate retreats, Savannah Sunset Resort and Spa will offer a versatile event space with great views and service to make every celebration unforgettable.

"We are excited to welcome guests this [summer] to the Savannah Sunset Resort and Spa, where opulence meets the open savannah in the heart of New Jersey," said **Brian Bacica**, park president. "Our team is planning every detail to create a luxury experience, welcoming guests to enjoy the beauty and uniqueness of our resort. Whether you seek relaxation, a family adventure or a romantic getaway, Savannah Sunset Resort and Spa promises to exceed your expectations."



The safari animals will stay on site year-round with climate-controlled indoor housing available for all tropical animals. A full-time animal care team will look over their well-being, said Wheeler.

Rates start at around $600 a night for a two-guest room. Various package options are being offered.

Savannah Sunset Resort and Spa is part of one of the largest investments at Six Flags Great Adventure Resort in nearly two decades. In celebration of the destination's 50-year history, the park is also debuting its 15th roller coaster this summer. The Flash: Vertical Velocity, the first coaster of its kind in North America, joins the highly-anticipated return of the Safari Off Road Adventure and modern updates to the nostalgic Log Flume and Big Wheel rides.

In addition, **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor** will open Splash Island, a new family-centric area giving guests of all ages an opportunity for some interactive fun in the sun.

Six Flags Great Adventure opened for the 2024 season on March 16.

FAST FACTS

Taking reservations; opening June 14

•

Located in the middle of
Six Flags Great Adventure Wild Safari park

•

Resort includes a fine-dining restaurant,
VIP experiences, spa services and multi-park passes

•

Nighttime activities offered

•

Free-roaming giraffes, oryxes, wildebeests and
many other African species around the campsites

•

20 luxurious glamping suites.

NEAAPA draws 100 attendees at 111th annual conference, meeting

AT: *Pam Sherborne*
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

STAMFORD, Conn. — **NEAAPA, the Northeast Entertainment Association**, held its 111th Anniversary Education Conference and Annual Meeting March 4-6, at the **Hilton Stamford Hotel and Executive Meeting Center** in Stamford, Connecticut.

According to the association's **Ed Hodgdon,** more than 100 attendees participated.

NEAAPA represents the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont. There also are manufacturer and supplier members that support the industry.

The event is designed for industry professionals working at amusement parks, water parks, family entertainment centers, roller skating centers, bowling centers, mobile attraction operators, zoos and aquariums, challenge courses and ziplines, museums and more.

There was an array of classes offered this year covering topics of importance to its members. Some of those classes included Active Shooter Attack Prevention and Preparedness (ASAPP), led by **Steve McPherson** of **Canobie Lake Park** and **Bullets Campbell**, certified ASAPP Instructor, SWAT Team senior leader, principal firearms instructor and principal tactical instructor for the Connecticut region; Creating a Culture of Gratitude, led by **Laura McNerney** of **Leadership Learning Group;** Best Practices in Facilities Maintenance, led by **Cory Cormier** of **Funtown Splashtown USA**; Slips, Trips and Falls Litigation led by **Paul Cavanaugh** of **Daly Cavanaugh, LLP**; and Engaging your Local Leaders, led by **Joe Montalto** of **High Mountain Enterprises.**

This year one of the classes taught was Active Shooter Attack Prevention and Preparedness (ASAPP), led by a FBI trainer from the New Haven, Connecticut. COURTESY NEAAPA

There also were roundtable discussions covering many different topics in a round-robin style. Topics included advocacy, safety, staffing, operations, food and beverage, live entertainment and marketing.

During the Annual Meeting Dinner, the following awards were presented:

•President's Award to Miranda **Winward** of **Canobie Lake Park**

•Alan E. Ramsay Safety Award to **Jhomar Bennett** of **Luna Park** in Coney Island

•Paragon Award for Marketing Excellence to **Lauren Wood Weaver** of **Sally Dark Rides**

The Hall of Fame inductees were *(see sidebar)*:

•**Frank Darling**, creator of **Playland Park** in Rye, New York

•**Christos G. Chagros** of **Fiesta Shows**

•**Greg Chiecko** of **The Big E** and **Outdoor Amusement Business Association**

•**neaapa.com**

Lauren Wood Weaver of Sally Dark Rides was honored with the Paragon Award for Marketing Excellence at this year's 111th anniversary NEAAPA Education Conference and Annual Meeting. With her above left are John Guertin (left) of Guertin Graphics and Awards and Chris Nicoli of Canobie Lake Park and current NEAAPA president. Seen above right is this year's Alan E. Ramsay Safety Award went to Jhomar Bennett of Luna Park in Coney Island. COURTESY NEAAPA

2024 Inductees of NEAAPA Hall of Fame

NEAAPA's Hall of Fame Inductees were honored on March 5, during the organization's 111th Anniversary Education Conference and Annual Meeting**.**

Meet them below:

•**Christos (Chris) Chagros** began working for Eugene Dean, Sr., the father of his good friend, Eugene Dean, Jr., around 1970, in the game operation in Salisbury Beach, Massachusetts.

Chagros

Having a natural ability to run games and a great eye for merchandise, he went into a partnership with his boyhood friend, Dean, Jr., on their carnival circuit. He started with lucky strike dime pitches and evolved into **Skee Ball** trailers and group games.

He had many talents that helped him gain success, but his friends say it was his ability to discover, research and source the most cutting-edge merchandise.

•**Greg Chiecko** was the general manager of **Chicopee's Birch-N-Bend Gardens,** Chicopee, Massachusetts, in 1983, a family business, before he launched his career in the attractions industry.

Chiecko

In 1994, he served as a member of the **Eastern States Exposition's** Junior Fair Board, West Springfield, Massachusetts, and then was named sales manager of the Eastern States Exposition. He held that position for 24 years.

In 2019, he was named the president and CEO of the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** (OABA).

Over the years, Greg has volunteered with many organizations, including the **Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors' Bureau**, Illinois, the **Massachusetts Agricultural Fairs Association**, the **Rotary Club of Chicopee, Massachusetts**, and is a past president of NEAAPA.

•Between 1923 and 1925, the Westchester County Board of Supervisors of New York purchased more than 200 acres of land to create a seaside public park for the people of the county.

In 1927, **Frank W. Darling,** who was president of the **L.A. Thompson Scenic Railway Company** at Coney Island**,** New York, was tapped by the **Westchester County Park Commission** to construct, operate and manage **Playland Park**, Rye, New York.

Darling

By then, he had constructed amusement parks in New Zealand, at the **British Empire Exposition** in Wembley, England, and at the **Modern Art Exposition** in Paris, France.

Construction began after Labor Day, 1927, and the park was completed for opening on May 26, 1928.

Darling was director of Playland for several years afterward and completed additional projects such as the Olympic-size pool, increased boardwalk concessions, an indoor ice-skating rink, a scenic railway and additional restaurants and picnic areas.

—Pam Sherborne

Chocolatetown USA site of annual PAPA spring meeting in 2024

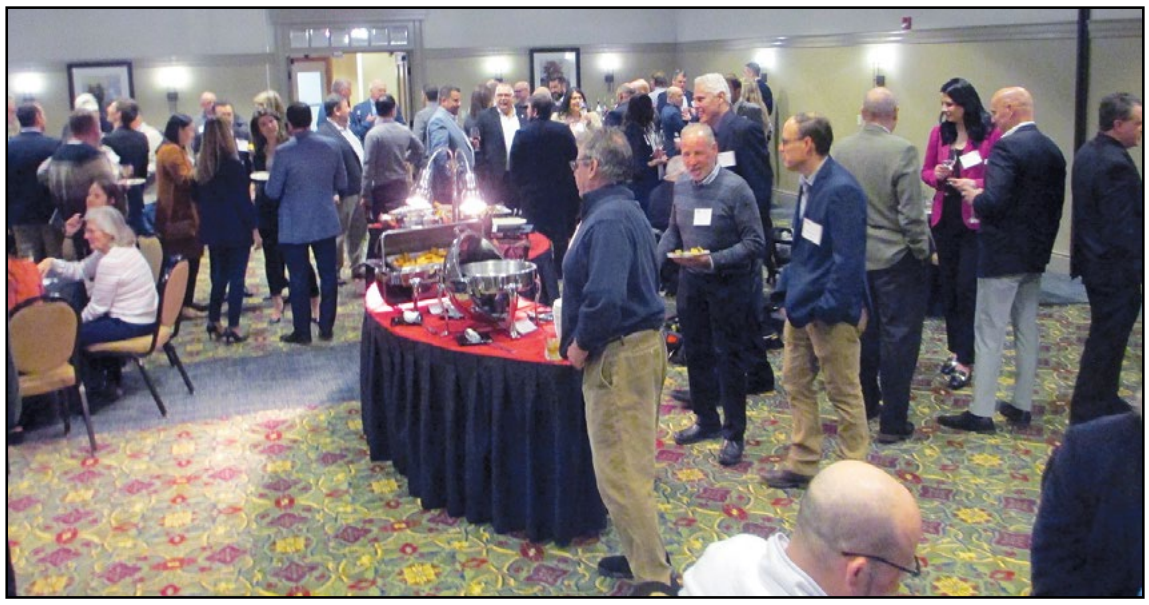
AT: *B. Derek Shaw*
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HERSHEY, Pa. — Eighty-six members and guests of the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions Association** (PAPA) assembled February 26 and 27 for its annual spring meeting at **Hershey Lodge and Convention Center**. Attendees were comprised of member parks and attractions, suppliers and manufacturers and individual members. PAPA strives to foster an environment where industry peers can gather and learn from one another.

The first day included a board of directors meeting in the afternoon followed by a reception and banquet that evening. Both the board meeting and evening proceedings were led by PAPA President **Scott Silar**, assistant director of attractions at **Hershey Entertainment & Resorts**.

A special commendation in the form of a plaque was presented to recent retiree, **Tim Timko**, for his years of service on the PAPA board. Part of the inscription read, "for…your hard work chairing the Barbara Knoebel Memorial Scholarship Award Committee. Honoring your dedication in helping the educational needs of students employed in Amusement Parks in Pennsylvania." He is the former president and CEO of **S&S Worldwide**. Timko now serves as president of **Atlantic Culinary Environment**.

The popular 50/50 raffle for the Barbara J. Knoebel Scholarship Fund took place. As a result, over $600 was raised. The winner, **Adam Jones, Great Wolf Lodge**, donated his portion back to the fund. Each year, seven $1,000 scholarships are awarded to students who work at any of the participating member parks or attractions. Upon the conclusion of dinner, many attendees retired to the lobby bar to continue networking.



Prior to the first day dinner, a reception was held at Hershey Lodge and Convention Center. There were 86 in attendance at the annual spring meeting (above). A portion of the attendees of the always-popular, roundtable discussions. It was held in the Hersheypark service center conference room with more 25 participants (below). AT/B. DEREK SHAW

The second day started with the annual breakfast membership meeting. Association business included reports on various aspects of the industry: legislative updates, Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board, a recap of the fall **Parks and Carnivals Education** (PACE) ride safety seminar, water park issues, PAPA website, marketing and human resource matters. PAPA Secretary/Treasurer **Dick Knoebel** again gave his financial report, opting to keep it brief with just a trio of words, "We are solvent!"

One of the recent legislative issues was the passing of the sale of alcohol at amusement facilities, as Silar explained: "In Pennsylvania, a bill passed and became an act at the end of 2023 that allows amusement facilities to have one liquor license and serve alcohol anywhere within that facility. Previously, each food stand had to have its own liquor license."

Silar shared why the meeting is important for members to gather each spring: "We always have the members come together and share fellowship, talk about our celebrations and our obstacles as an industry and how to market Pennsylvania as a fantastic place to come and enjoy with family in our parks and waterparks. We don't like recreating the wheel. We lean on each other to help get through the obstacles, so that we can celebrate those wins together."

Tourism is on the rise. "In Pennsylvania, we are growing tourism," said Siler. "**Governor Shapiro** provided quite a significant increase to the state tourism office. We believe that tourism, hospitality and travel could very well be a fantastic segue to economic development. We're going to use that and move our industry forward to help promote Pennsylvania as a place to come, have fun and make memories with families."

Upon conclusion of the meeting, some of the attendees participated in the always-popular roundtable discussions. It was held in the Hersheypark service center conference room with more than 25 people from five parks involved in the lively conversation covering a gamut of subjects.

This was the 89th edition of the spring meeting of the PAPA. The organization was formed in 1935 with **R.L. Plarr** from **Dorney Park** serving as the first President. In 1946, famed roller coaster designer **Herbert P. Schmeck** from **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** was president. The annual spring meeting is traditionally held in Hershey. The 2024 summer fun meeting will be held at **Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom**, Allentown, Pennsylvania, July 22 and 23. The next PACE ride safety seminar takes place October 29-November 1 in Bloomsburg with **Knoebels Amusement Resort** being the location for the "hands-on" training day.

Brian Knoebel, fourth-generation Knoebels Amusement Resort owner and Haley Knoebel, marketing coordinator, Premier Rides, enjoyed some father/daughter time at the reception (above left). Tim Timko received a plaque for his years of service as a PAPA board member (above middle). He now serves as president of Atlantic Culinary Environment. Scott Silar (above right) is the 52nd president of PAPA, serving the second year of his two-year term. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

29th NJAA Variety Show held along with online NAARSO training

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — The East Coast Gift & Variety Show again took place at the **Golden Nugget Resort and Casino**, on February 28 and 29, presented by the **New Jersey Attractions Association** (NJAA).

The 23 participating vendors brought their newest games, prizes and food for attendees to see, purchase and implement in their establishments. On the first day of the expo, the NJAA hosted its 33rd annual scholarship kick-off cocktail party on the trade show floor.

"This year's NJAA East Coast expo was a huge success," said **Kim Samarelli**, NJAA executive director. "The vendors were very happy, buyers were out. People were connecting and socializing and networking and we look forward to this upcoming summer season of 2024."

The 550 attendees included owners, partners, managers and buyers, as well as workers of amusement parks, arcades, games, concessions, piers and restaurants.

The show began in the mid-1970s at the **Aztec Hotel** in Seaside Heights, New Jersey. Vendors operated out of their rooms, with attendees traveling from room to room. Other recent locations have included the **Trump Marina** and **Taj Mahal**, both in Atlantic City. This was the 15th time at the Golden Nugget.

The NJAA is a proactive organization, that identifies concerns while working for the safety, health and overall economic betterment of the amusement industry.

From February 5 through March 15, the 16th annual East Coast/Mid-Atlantic **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials** (NAARSO) training was held virtually in conjunction with the NJAA. The outreach safety school had 90 participants completing the online program.

—B. Derek Shaw

Beston, occupying 16 show spaces, had a large assortment of arcade games for show attendees to try. COURTESY NJAA

The show offered several workshops, including one on the ADA and service animals. It was presented by Ashley Toth and Lary Zucker, both with Marshall Dennehey law firm. Toth also covered wage transparency legislation. Another topic included legalized games of chance control commission certification and policy updates. COURTESY NJAA

There were 23 vendors, including Classic Toy, selling the newest arcade games, prizes, plush toys, uniforms, rides, insurance and cashless vending systems. Other participating companies included AA Global Industries, BMI, Bob's Space Racers, Bruno & Company, Caravan/ Big T, Goffa, Good Stuff, Intercard, and Jazwares. COURTESY NJAA

Mini Bowling USA was a first-time vendor at the show. Other participating businesses included Mg Import, Mitchell Yarwin Sales, Player One Group, RBI Toys, Rhode Island Novelty, Robbi Promotional, Rides 4 U, Semnox Solutions and Veneco Business Solutions. COURTESY NJAA

ON THE MOVE

RES Rides announced that **Oscar Elgarrista** has joined the company as project and safety engineer. Elgarrista brings experience and passion about leisure engineering, design, operations and safety.

Elgarrista

During his more than a decade of experience, he has held various engineering and safety roles with other amusement ride manufacturers. Elgarrista heads up the **Leisure Engineering Committee** in Spain and is also involved with sustainability working groups.

"It is great to have Oscar on board. His passion for amusement engineering and safety is a great asset for our team," said **Roman Rothe**, technical director of RES Rides.

Polin Group announced the promotion of **Ahmet Sumer** to the position of business development director for the Latin America region. Formerly serving as the sales manager for more than six years, Sumer brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role.

Sumer

"I am honored to take on this new challenge and excited to further contribute to the growth and success of Polin Group in the Latin America market,"commented Sumer. "I eagerly anticipate collaborating closely with our dedicated team and valued partners to drive innovation, deliver exceptional value and exceed our customers' expectations."

As the newly appointed business development director – LATAM, Sumer will lead the expansion efforts of Polin Group in the Latin American market. Sumer is well-positioned to capitalize on emerging opportunities and strengthen the company's presence in this strategically important region.

Palace Entertainment has appointmented **Michael Reitz** as director of engineering and maintenance across all of the company's venues.

"We are pleased to announce the addition of Michael to our support center team," said Interim Chief Operating Officer **Anil Rao**. "His diverse experience with some of the industry's most well-known attractions makes him the perfect fit to help lead our ongoing maintenance projects across each of our unique properties."

Reitz

Reitz brings more than 30 years of engineering experience to Palace Entertainment. He has a background in mechanical engineering and began his career with **Mercedes Benz** in 1992. Since then, he has worked for key leaders within the amusement industry including **Lego Engineering** and **Premier Rides Inc.** Most recently, he spent more than 20 years at **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** working across all domestic and international properties including Canada, Mexico, China and Dubai.

Global design, fabrication and project management company **Adirondack Studios** (ADKS) has hired theater and cruise veteran **Jeff Moulton** as its new vice president of project delivery.

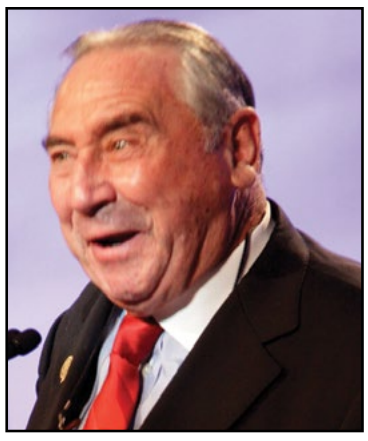
Moulton

"I couldn't be more thrilled to be joining the executive team at ADKS, especially at this very robust tipping point for both the company and the industry at large," said Moulton. "I'm looking forward to further elevating our production processes, delivering world-class product for guests around the globe, and providing extremely high-touch client relations as ADKS continues to grow into the future."

According to ADKS President **Michael Blau**, Moulton's extensive experience in driving creative teams, people-focused strategic planning and results-based operational excellence are what made him a natural fit for the role.

OBITUARIES

Industry veteran, entrepreneur and showman Roland Koch passes away


Roland Koch

AUSTRIA — The German amusement entrepreneur and showman Roland Koch passed away on February 6, surrounded by his family in Austria.

He was 89 years old.

With Koch's passing, the international amusement industry has lost a valued colleague, friend and pioneer.

Roland Koch, who took over the business from his father Georg Koch in 1958, continued to successfully expand the sausage pavilions and catering businesses before handing over the baton to the next generation, his son Thomas Koch, in 1981.

He owned and operated rides and restaurants in amusement parks and fairgrounds throughout Germany. He also was instrumental in the development of the Alt Berlin restaurant (now Unter den Linden) at Phantasialand in Brühl.

His family and friends said he was a man who always kept an open eye on the industry and developed new ideas. He had a particular passion for large-format films and, not least, brought the 180-degree cinema format to Europe.

Koch also was a long-time and close friend of the Mack family and a companion of Franz Mack and the Waldkirch-based company Mack Rides, according to the publication, *Euro Attractions Professional*.

"We travelled the world together with Roland," said his long-time friend Kurt Mack-Even. "He always had a goal in mind. We had a lot of fun together and, knowing him, I'm sure he'll get in touch when he gets bored in heaven. May he rest in peace."

Koch gave back to the amusement industry by being involved in industry associations throughout his life, filling honorary positions in order to actively help shape and advance the global leisure industry.

Wieland Schwarzkopf, president of the German Association of Amusement Machinery and Accessory Manufacturers (VDV) said: "Roland was not only a close friend to me, but also a fatherly friend. But he also was an ambassador for the industry. Wherever he was, doors opened.

"In the 1960s, he was one of the first to introduce many manufacturers to international business. And his legendary Wies'n parties will probably also remain unforgotten," Schwarzkopf said.

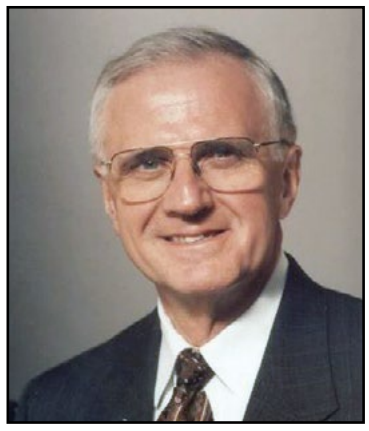
Koch was known as a generous person and philanthropist. He built an orphanage in Africa, for example.

His family and friends said he was always warm, hospitable and ready to lend a helping hand to industry colleagues and friends.

One of his greatest pleasures was bringing people together and exchanging ideas with them. For his service to the leisure industry, Koch was honored with the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Lifetime Service Award, among others.

Together with his wife and children, the industry mourns the loss of a special person.

Former IAAPA President, Marriott Corproration executive John Graff passes from Parkinson's


John Graff

ANNANDALE, Va. — John Robert Graff, 87, born on March 14, 1936 in Madison, South Dakota, passed away on December 28, 2023 in Annandale, Virginia.

Graff attended school at the University of South Dakota, Indiana University, and Catholic University.

Graff was a former president and chief executive of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), had a significant and long-lasting impact on the global association for the attractions industry and the industry around the world.

He was inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame in 2001 for his contributions to the association and the industry.

"In our industry, John was truly one of the good guys," remembered Dennis Spiegel of International Theme Park Services, on Graff's memorial page. "He had a huge heart and was a genuinely caring person about people and our membership. During my presidency of IAAPA, John and I travelled to many regions of the globe — Brazil, Mexico, Japan, Russia, to name a few — where we pledged to support and nurture their fledgling industry until they could support themselves — all of which reached their goal!

"Our first trip to Russia at the invite of the Ministry of Culture was an amazing trip making friends that lasted decades. John was a big softy, and it showed quite often. That was a wonderful characteristic of his personality. He did a yeoman's job for our industry. His legacy will carry forward for many years to come."

Graff also helped Marriott Corporation build its first theme parks, and his leadership helped transform IAAPA from a United States-based organization into a respected global association.

Showman, Doolan Amusement Company founder and food concessionaire Tina Doolan passes away

Doolan

STUART, Fla. — Tina Doolan, of Stuart, Florida, passed away on January 12, 2024, surrounded by family. She was a loving wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, a proud business owner, as well as a good friend.

Tina Doolan was born on September 3, 1941, the oldest of four children and the only daughter of Ernest and Shirley Guilmette of Portland, Connecticut. She graduated from Portland High School and went on to waitress at the Cyprus Grill in Middletown, Connecticut. There she met the love of her life and partner of 61 years, John. Tina and John married in 1965 and raised three sons, David, Mark and Michael.

He introduced her to the outdoor amusement industry, and together they built Doolan Amusement Company while living in Connecticut. In 1978, the two moved their home and business base to Nettles Island, Florida.

For decades, the two have operated their traveling amusement company of rides and food at fairs and festivals from Florida to Maine. Tina Doolan was also well-known in the concession business and operated her Banquet-in-a-Bun concession at some of the largest and finest events on the East Coast and received several fair awards.

Known for being the life of the party, she loved her family, friends and her business. She enjoyed supporting the outdoor amusement industry, watching *Jeopardy* and sports, as well as celebrating Christmas with her family.

Jerry Boyles, Founder of Boyles Joyland, passes

Boyles

TOPEKA, Kan. — Gerald "Jerry" Melvin Boyles, 89, passed away January 7, 2024. He was born March 3, 1934, in Wichita and moved to Topeka where he graduated from Highland Park High School in 1952. He served in the U.S. Army, Korean war and was stationed in Japan.

Boyles was a mechanical genius and spent his lifetime building the Boyles' family businesses: Joyland Amusement Park (Kiddie Land), Dairy Freeze, Ice Cream Wagons, Dry Ice, Christmas Trees, Statues & Stuff and Joyland Flea Market.

"His record of conduct, performance and devotion to duty reflects allegiance to the highest standard of professionalism. Thank you for your hard work, quality customer service, and contributions to the Kansas economy," commented Governor Laura Kelly.

Regarding his father's time at Joyland, Boyles's son, Jeff, stated: "He loved to see smiles on all the kids."

Focus on the HORIZON

Giving back is a lifelong theme

BALTIMORE, Md. — Serving, volunteering and supporting are activities senior leaders in the attractions industry often get involved with late in their careers. For Megan Gannon, they are essential activities in her everyday life and budding career.

"I have always loved the industry," said Megan Gannon, themed entertainment business development manager, Image Engineering. "Kennywood is my hometown park, and my family would visit Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando every year. Each time I would say to myself, 'This is where I want to be.'"

To help make that dream a reality, Gannon enrolled at the University of Central Florida (UCF) at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. "I wanted to be around the magic and be involved in any way possible way," she said. "As soon as I started school, I began to seek ways to learn and be a part of the industry."

She joined the Future Theme Park Leaders Association (FTPLA) at UCF, alongside other hospitality students. Together they would visit area parks, hear from industry professionals and take part in events that peeled back the curtain on life in the attractions industry. "While in high school, I had seen the 'Moden Marvels' episode about Walt Disney Imagineering and that inspired and excited me. Through my studies and the opportunities I had with FTPLA, I was able to glimpse further into that world."

When not studying, Gannon worked at her first role in the industry. "UCF encouraged us to have jobs while in school, so I earned a frontline position at Disney's Hollywood Studios. I was able to tap into my passion for public speaking and had a role facilitating 'On With the Show,' the company's training program for new cast members. I was able to tell stories about the theming of the park and its history as I led tours for the new hires. I was paid to talk, and truly, I would have done it for free."

As Gannon worked toward her degree, she continued to learn more about the industry, earning an internship at Universal Orlando, but it was a special turn in 2018 that helped her begin to outline her future. "The IAAPA Foundation provides scholarships to students at UCF and other schools. I was granted one of the scholarships, and it really made a difference. For an out-of-state student, this was an amazing gift that made all the difference and allowed me to stay in school full-time. In addition, I was invited to attend IAAPA Expo 2018, the opening reception and the GM and Owners' Breakfast as one of that year's scholarship recipients, and all of it was free. Tom and Bobby Wages and Jane Cooper helped open huge doors for me with that scholarship. Attending IAAPA Expo changed everything. It showed me career paths I had never even dreamed of."

It was during IAAPA Expo that Gannon saw how giving back is part of the DNA of many industry professionals. She returned to IAAPA Expo as a show ambassador in 2019 and continued to build new relationships. During her internship at Universal Orlando, she was encouraged to explore additional opportunities to learn and soon joined the AIMS Young Professional Counsel. When asked why she sought so many time-consuming volunteer activities, Gannon explained, "It's easy to get involved in something when you are an expert. While I knew then — and still know — I'm growing in my career, I also wanted to share my insight and learnings. I've found a way to use my love for communicating to hopefully inspire others. No two people have the same journey, and it's important to me to share my path thus far with my peers." Gannon has served as a guest speaker at the AIMS Annual Safety Conference, as well as presented to the IAAPA Board of Directors about the importance of the IAAPA Foundation's scholarship program.

"After that presentation, Jim Seay [president, Premier Rides] gave me great advice. He encouraged me to seek out the women in the attractions industry. He said the female leaders would be great mentors and would support me as well as be great resources. He told me not to be shy about reaching out and getting to know them."

After graduation, Gannon's career appeared to stall before it even began, due to the COVID pandemic. She used that time to lean into the relationships she had nurtured through her student experiences and earned a part-time job at IAAPA in the sales department. "It was there that I learned firsthand how to make true connections," she said. "My professors would tell us that networking was the key to earning a job, and up until that point, I was always focused on being professional and always on. I saw a shift in that approach at IAAPA. As I got to know and partner with the members, I saw that true success comes from people. When I met members and would extend my hand or business card, I would often be told, 'Give me a hug! It's so great to meet and work with you.' Everyone was professional, as well as welcoming and genuine. I learned that true business success comes from real relationships."

Her early frontline training and experience continue to assist her. "Guest service is a tough role, and while I loved the industry, I discovered it wasn't where my heart was. However, presenting, communicating and helping to find a solution for others were parts of guest service that were important to me. Sales has offered me the opportunity to tap into all of that. IAAPA helped me first use those passions, and now I bring them every day to our clients and partners at Image Engineering."

When asked if she had any advice for those who are coming up behind her, Gannon blushed and paused. "Well, I hope this advice applies to anyone who wants to be a part of the attractions industry, at any level or discipline," she concluded. "Always be open to help, learn and find ways to give back. It's never too late — or too early — to start."

—Susan Storey

Megan Gannon
Image Engineering
Baltimore, Maryland

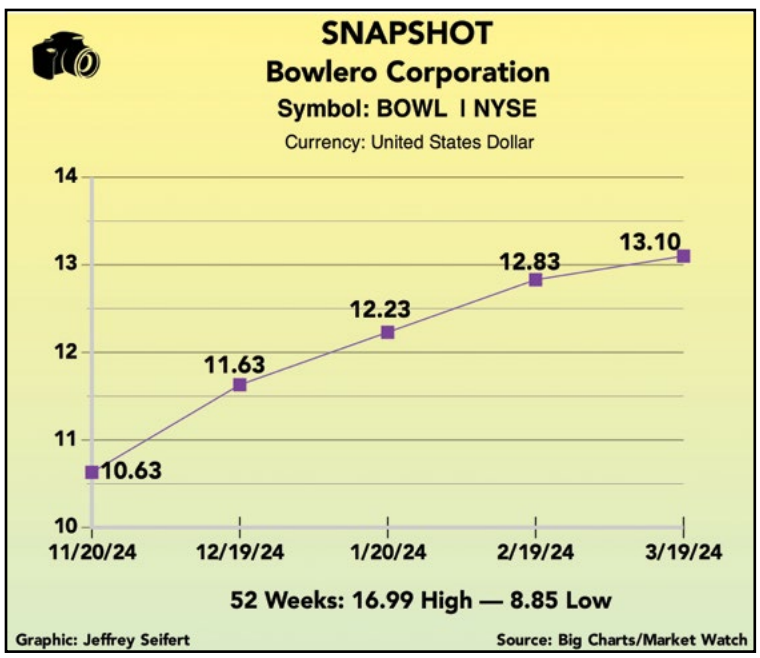
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 3/20/24	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	127.76	133.56	79.29
Bowlero Corp.	BOWL	NYSE	13.40	16.90	8.85
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	42.34	45.93	34.04
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	43.10	47.45	35.28
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	63.55	64.90	31.65
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	41.68	49.10	33.92
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	9.51	44.00	7.02
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	4035.00	5820.00	3730.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.79	1.92	0.67
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	17.00	28.45	16.15
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	44.61	51.35	34.12
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.39	0.61	0.23
Royal Carribean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	135.53	137.44	59.37
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	26.18	28.99	18.29
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	754.00	822.00	684.00
United Parks & Resorts Inc.	PRKS	NYSE	54.32	61.76	40.87
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	116.46	117.19	78.73
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	8.74	15.56	8.02
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	114.00	139.00	108.00
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1245.00	1515.00	799.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	15.66	23.01	9.84

Details and information available at *amusementtoday.com/stocks*

Worldwide Markets — CSE/DK: Copenhagen Stock Exchange; **HK**: The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong; **JP**: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; **NASDAQ**: National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; **NYSE**: New York Stock Exchange; **OCT**: Over -the-counter stocks; **TAIEX**: The Taiwan Capitalization Weighted Stock Index; **TYO**: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; **TW**: The Taiwan Stock Exchange.

—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 3/18/24	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	$4.127	($0.182)
Midwest	$3.955	($0.066)
Gulf Coast	$3.745	($0.185)
Mountain	$3.968	($0.382)
West Coast	$4.148	($0.367)
California	$5.203	($0.057)

CURRENCY

On 3/21/24 $1 USD =	
0.9197	EURO
0.7856	GBP (British Pound)
151.41	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8891	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5287	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3557	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

United Parks releases fourth quarter results

ORLANDO — **United Parks & Resorts Inc**. (previously known as **SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.**), reported its financial results for the fourth quarter and fiscal year 2023.

"We are pleased to report another quarter and fiscal year of strong financial results," said **Marc Swanson**, chief executive officer of United Parks & Resorts Inc. "In the fourth quarter, we delivered record attendance and record in-park per capita spending despite adverse weather impacts, in particular across our Florida markets during peak visitation periods and an unfavorable calendar shift in the quarter. For the full year, we delivered near-record results and grew our total revenue per capita for the sixth year in a row, despite significant adverse weather impacts throughout the year. We estimate that weather-related and calendar-shift impacts reduced attendance by approximately 75,000 visits in the fourth quarter and that weather-related impacts reduced attendance by over 370,000 visits for the full year."

In the fourth quarter of 2023, the company hosted approximately five million guests, generated total revenues of $389 million, net income of $40.1 million and Adjusted EBITDA of $150.4 million. Attendance increased approximately 23,000 guests when compared to the fourth quarter of 2022 primarily due to an increase in demand, partly from the company's Halloween and Christmas events.

Six Flags reveals end-of-year financial results

ARLINGTON, Texas. — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** reported fourth quarter revenue of $293 million, net loss of $22 million and adjusted EBITDA of $98 million. For the full year, the company reported revenue of $1,426 million, net income of $39 million and adjusted EBITDA of $462 million.

"As we close out our second year pursuing our premiumization strategy, we are encouraged by the progress we have made to date. Since 2021, we have grown guest spending per capita by 17%, lowered cash expense in the face of historical levels of inflation, leveraged key partnerships to expand sponsorship revenue, and paid down debt," said **Selim Bassoul**, president and CEO. "We have laid the groundwork long-term for profitable growth, and we have many exciting new developments in store for the 2024 season, including new innovative rides, immersive experiences, and new guest-facing technological innovations that will create a more seamless in-park experience, drive guest spending and improve operational efficiency."

Total revenue for fourth quarter 2023 increased $13 million, or 5%, compared to fourth quarter 2022, driven by higher attendance, partially offset by lower guest spending per capita.

Cedar Fair reports results for 2023

SANDUSKY, Ohio — **Cedar Fair Entertainment Company** announced its 2023 fourth-quarter and full-year results, ended Dec. 31, 2023.

"With the return to more normal operating conditions in the back half of 2023, the strength and resiliency of Cedar Fair's business model was on full display," said Cedar Fair CEO **Richard Zimmerman**. "We remained nimble and successfully adapted to an evolving marketplace to offset the effects of anomalous macro-factors, including weather, on demand during the first half of the year. In the second half of the year, in addition to more normalized operating conditions, we made mid-year adjustments to our marketing and pricing strategies that successfully drove increased demand while our park teams effectively implemented cost-saving measures to expand operating margins."

For 2023, net revenues totaled $1.80 billion on attendance of 26.7 million guests, compared with net revenues of $1.82 billion on attendance of 26.9 million guests in 2022.

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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

Safe Slide restores Splashin' Safari's Watubee — page 48 / NWSC safety seminar recap — page 50

SGE Camp emphasizes safety, legal advice and crisis management

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StarGuard Elite set a record attendance for its 2024 CAMP conference at sea. SGE President Wess Long welcomed attendees to CAMP aboard the Allure of the Seas (below left). Pete Dequincy led an intense session on life-saving protocols filled with both efficiency and humor (below right). COURTESY STEPHEN MARVA; AT/TIM BALDWIN

ORLANDO — For the ninth year, **StarGuard Elite** has offered one of its annual training conferences at sea. Called CAMP (CAMP being an acronym for Conference for Aquatic Management Professionals), attendees in many fields of the aquatics industry gather in Orlando, shuttle to Port Canaveral and undergo rigorous training — at sea. This year was yet another record attendance as 125 attendees sailed to the Bahamas on **Royal Caribbean**'s Allure of the Seas.

"We doubled the size of the space on the biggest ship we've ever done," said **Wess Long**, president, StarGuard Elite. "We've been able to bring more people this year than we've ever done because of the space and capacity. It was awesome."

Setting sail, 125 attendees embarked on a four-day cruise of diverse learning, beginning January 29. Of the attendees, 25 states and 13 nationalities were represented. Sixty attendees were first-timers. An orientation took place during the first afternoon, and all attendees were encouraged to dine together the first evening.

Classes began in earnest on the following day. **Shawn DeRosa** of **DeRosa Aquatic Consulting** spoke on the Foundations of Defensibility. In addition to the fact that most injuries are preventable, DeRosa made thought-provoking points of "slow days are deadly days," the importance of compassionate treatment and follow-up from management, and that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. DeRosa had presentations on both Tuesday and Thursday.

Pete Dequincy spoke on Energizing Your Training and delivered an intense (but entertaining) hardcore session.

SGE's **Dr. Justin Sempsrott** had multiple sessions throughout the cruise, one of which on Tuesday dealt with Advance Bleeding Control in Practice.

Jeff Chatterton of **Checkmate Public Affairs** began his three-part series on Crisis Communications Bootcamp and spoke each day.

"I'm not surprised by how much I've learned at my first CAMP Cruise, but I'm excited by how much I've learned," said **Amanda Blum**, operations director, **Wild Rivers Water Park**. "I love how much of a community everyone really is, and they are willing to share ideas."

Wednesday and Thursday offered more classes, which included the latest trends with AEDs and other emergency equipment, including drowning detection technology.

Franceen Gonzales of **WhiteWater West** spoke twice. The first presentation focused on careers in the industry, and the second surrounded the importance (and history of) water park safety standards.

"Having done this for a number of years, one of the things this year that was an absolute home run for us was the quality and depth of the speakers," said Long. "When we set out to create 2024's itinerary, we talked about who we wanted [to bring in]. For legal defensibility, Shawn is a great speaker and a top aquatics expert in the field. We wanted a training session, and Pete is one of the top lifeguard trainers in the world. And I wanted someone outside the box. I don't think there is anyone who has had more impact on aquatics safety on our industry than Franceen Gonzales. We started there. We were glad to have them here."

Brent Parsons, general

See SGE, page 46

SGE

Continued from page 45

manager, **Myrtle Waves Waterpark**, returned for a second year of CAMP. "The first time I attended was in 2018. To see how much larger it is now is a big surprise. We're in the process of getting new AEDs this year, so having the equipment review was a big thing for us. I think having more sessions like that is helpful for people who attend multiple years. Having that resource like this to get that info together is very helpful."

The final day of the cruise provided an open water rescue inservice while at **Perfect Day at Coco Cay**. Attendees were able to enjoy a few hours enjoying the beauty and attractions of the private island following the training.

"We decided long ago in like Year Two that we weren't going to focus on lifeguard instruction," said Long. "Obviously, aquatic safety and the standards are critical, but everyone comes in with those skills. We focus on what else we can challenge. Individuals like Franceen can talk about career development and stretching, understanding these other committees. Bringing in litigation trends and people like Pete who bring in different dynamics about how you operate and do things — all of that is what sets us apart. It's not about making you a better lifeguard instructor, it's about making you a better aquatics professional."

The StarGuard program was founded in 1999 and has more than 25 years of proven success in making aquatic facilities safer. StarGuard Elite has clients in 27 countries and offers CAMP in U.S. destinations, as well as internationally. CAMP Florida is the only one at sea.

"What sets CAMP apart is that every year is different — the itinerary is different, the agenda, the speakers, the focus. We already have a plan for next year, and that plan is completely different than this year or the prior year," Long told *Amusement Today*. "The fact that we are able to do it in a unique venue and are able to do more networking and more benchmarking than other shows, this one brings a really unique experience — the networking piece, being able to see other operations firsthand — it is second to none."

WhiteWater West's Franceen Gonzales spoke to attendees on the importance of industry safety standards and their history (above left). On-site open water rescue training took place at Perfect Day at Coco Cay (above right). Attendees were able to enjoy the fun that Coco Cay has to offer (below). AT/TIM BALDWIN

AIMS INTERNATIONAL

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Passing the AIMS International reins of leadership

Every two years, the reins of leadership of **AIMS International** are passed to a new president and vice president. On April 1, this tradition continued with **David Bromilow** passing the torch to **Pat Hoffman**, the new president, and **Randy Wilke** ascending to the role of vice president.

With nearly 40 years of service to AIMS International, Bromilow's rich and varied career has been dedicated to safety, maintenance, and operations. He currently serves as global director for parks and attractions at **Mobaro**.

"It has been my honor to serve as president of this organization. Over the past two years we have grown our programs and increased our membership. Our content continues to adapt to the industry's needs, and we have created new initiatives to deliver through our seminar, our on-the-road programs and online. The association's record numbers are a testament to the faith that park owners, and other leaders, have in the valuable continuing education that AIMS provides," offered Bromilow. "The faculty, instructors and students provide the lifeblood of our group. Our knowledgeable board and dedicated staff, led by Executive Director **Amy Lowenstein**, invest in strategies that support our goals.

Bromilow

"I am delighted to hand this role to Pat Hoffman. As a past president, Pat has a valuable working knowledge of the organization and its mission. I look forward to supporting both Pat and Randy as I resume my position on the board."

For Pat Hoffman of the **Hoffman Consulting Group**, this will be his third opportunity to serve as president of AIMS International.

"I want to thank AIMS members, seminar attendees, and the parks and organizations that support AIMS by sending their employees to the best safety, maintenance and operational seminar offered for the amusement industry," said Hoffman. "With your continued support, and our promise to improve and grow, the amusement industry will remain the safest form of recreation. Under David's leadership, AIMS has continued to grow with record numbers of attendees at our annual safety seminar and record number of certification exams. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our working board of directors who also serve as instructors and sponsors."

Hoffman

As president, Hoffman plans to focus on continued relationships with industry organizations including **IAAPA**, **OABA**, **WWA**, **IALDA**, **ASTM**, **E&A**, **ACOLAP** and others. "My goal is to continue the success of AIMS by fully supporting Amy and our staff, and to grow the seminar and our outreach programs."

Wilke, the newly-minted 2nd vice president, expressed his feelings on what this means to him: "I am deeply honored to have been elected as the vice president of AIMS International. I look forward to giving back to an organization that has done so much for me professionally. As my predecessors have done, I will continue to uphold the organization's core values of promoting safety education and fostering knowledge exchange within our industry. I am eager to work alongside our AIMS president, board and industry peers to further our mission and ensure AIMS continues to grow."

—Amy Lowenstein

Space for this AIMS page is provided courtesy of *Amusement Today* as a corporate partner of AIMS Intl. Content is provided by *AT* & AIMS.

Safe Slide Restoration brings new life to Splashin' Safari attraction

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Before the process begins, Safe Slide has to prepare the surface (left), allowing for the beautiful results (right). COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD

SANTA CLAUS, Ind. — The late **Will Koch**, former owner of **Holiday World**, credited the success of the park to two additions in the 1990s. In 1993, a water park was included. **Splashin' Safari** diversified activities for guests. In 1995, the park's first wooden roller coaster, The Raven, captured the attention of enthusiasts and brought international attention to the park. Since those investments decades ago, Holiday World & Splashin' Safari is now a globally recognized destination for legions of fans, even with it being in a small Indiana town.

Currently owned and run by Koch's children, the fourth-generation owners have seen the theme park and water park grow with three world-renowned wooden roller coasters, two of which have taken the Golden Ticket Award for Best Wooden Coaster during their tenure. Record-breaking waterslides have garnered the water park numerous accolades, with four attractions having won Golden Ticket Awards, three for Best Water Park Ride and one for Best New Water Park Ride.

With such a vital history, Splashin' Safari has not only grown into a giant among water parks, but it has also experienced three decades of expansion. During that time, attractions naturally begin to show their age.

Over the off-season, management turned to **Safe Slide Restoration** to bring renewed life to one of the water park's older attractions, a family raft ride called Watubee. It was supplied by **ProSlide**.

"Safe Slide has been a good partner for us, and the work they did on the slide in 2015 had an impressive lifespan," said **Tony Perkins**, director of maintenance. "The previous restoration held up very well with only minor repairs being done in the interim as needed. This year we only did the interior."

In 2017, the park replaced the wooden staircase with a newer steel tower and control system.

"Two key points are this project helps protect the guests, as well as protect the park's investment," said **Tony Perry**, vice president of customer relations, Safe Slide Restoration. "That's where aesthetics and practicality meet, when you are coating the interior and exterior on the slide."

"We monitored the project as it progressed. It was interesting to see how much prep work goes into it before the final finish is applied," Perkins told *Amusement Today*. "Watubee is a big slide, being 10 feet wide and 625 feet long. The restoration of this slide will make a big impact visually for riders and guests walking by!"

In the restoration process, Holiday World chose to keep the established color of the slide.

"Watubee was put into service in 1996, and we kept the original color scheme," said Perkins. "We do periodic restorations based on the condition of the slide, and we always work to stay ahead of an attraction's needs."

"The exterior coating is easiest to cover," added Perry. "You can do color changes in the ride path that aren't that difficult."

Perry noted that covering darker colors with a newer lighter color takes more coats to be effective.

"The project took about three weeks, and the weather was a factor," Perry told *AT*. "We have to be patient on 'spray day' and check the humidity, temperature and substrate temperature. Everything needs to be in alignment."

Amusingly, Perry said other occurrences weren't a factor — no chasing away deer in the trough or skunks from the splash pool, which has happened.

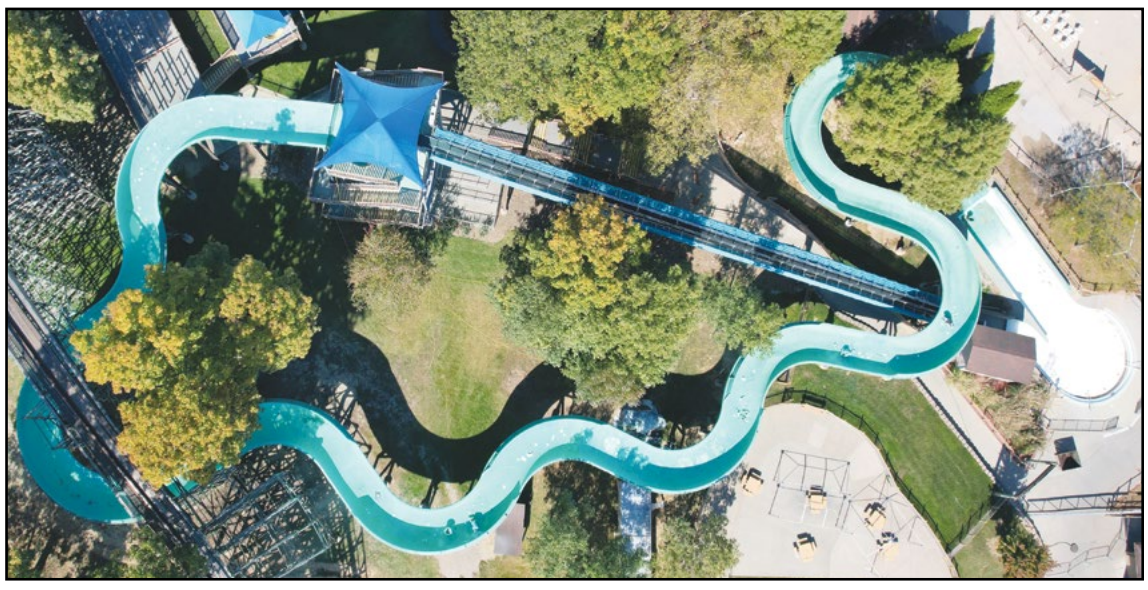
"We have a good partnership with Holiday World," Perry said. "We consistently work together. We work around their schedule and our schedule and the weather. That makes for a great partnership for us, and we look forward to working with them more in the future."

Safe Slide Restoration completed more than 400 projects last year.

"The most successful projects start with a great inspection. We have that onsite inspection with Holiday World," Perry said.

Holiday World reopens for the 2024 season on May 11. Splashin' Safari opens May 18.

"It is hard to believe that Splashin' Safari has been a part of Holiday World for over 30 years," noted Perkins. "Midwest summers can be incredibly hot, so making sure that Splashin' Safari offers the best guest experience every day is critical. We do that by adhering to our four cornerstones: Service, Friendliness, Cleanliness and, most importantly, Safety. We regularly and routinely perform maintenance on all of our attractions, and Splashin' Safari is no different. Our guests come to our parks to have a fantastic day, so we do everything that we can to make sure that all attractions are in top operational form."



Watubee has been delighting families since 1996. The slide is 625 feet long, which now looks brand new. COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD, SAFE SLIDE RESTORATION

World's Largest Swimming Lesson celebrates 15 years in June

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — Launched in June of 2010, The World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL) is a global water safety event focused on teaching life-saving, water competency skills to help prevent drowning and make water recreation more fun while building awareness about the vital importance of teaching kids to swim.

Celebrating 15 years, the 2024's World's Largest Swimming Lesson will take place on June 20 across the globe over the course of 24 hours. COURTESY WLSL

The 15th Annual WLSL event will take place around the globe on Thursday, June 20, 2024 over the course of 24 hours. The **World Waterpark Association** coordinates this event as a follow-up to National Water Safety Month. All types of aquatic facilities and learn-to-swim providers are welcome and encouraged to participate. Local WLSL events take place at hundreds of locations on six continents. Host locations can create a special WLSL event for their community or participate in the program by tracking and promoting their regularly scheduled swim lessons that day. A certified swim instructor must lead the WLSL, but participating locations are not required to be swim lesson providers.

Drowning is now the leading cause of death for kids ages 1-4, the second leading cause for kids 5-14 and the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death worldwide.

"There is still a lot of work to be done in connecting the dots between the real risk of childhood drowning and the need for basic water competency skills, crucial parental supervision and the use of layers of protection, including proper fencing," said **Rick Root**, president of the World Waterpark Association.

The WLSL event is a communication platform to educate parents and caregivers about this critical issue.

The cost to participate is $89 per facility, with discounts for operators that host the event at multiple locations. Registered facilities receive a comprehensive, turn-key *Host Location Guide* and digital marketing materials, including logos, posters, flyers, web banners, press releases and social media graphics, day-of-event materials, guidelines and the curriculum.

Since its inception, 5,487 aquatic facilities in 53 countries across six continents have served more than 383,000 kids and adults, helping generate billions of life-saving media impressions about the crucial importance of teaching children to swim.

•wlsl.org

NWSC safety seminar attendance showing comeback from COVID

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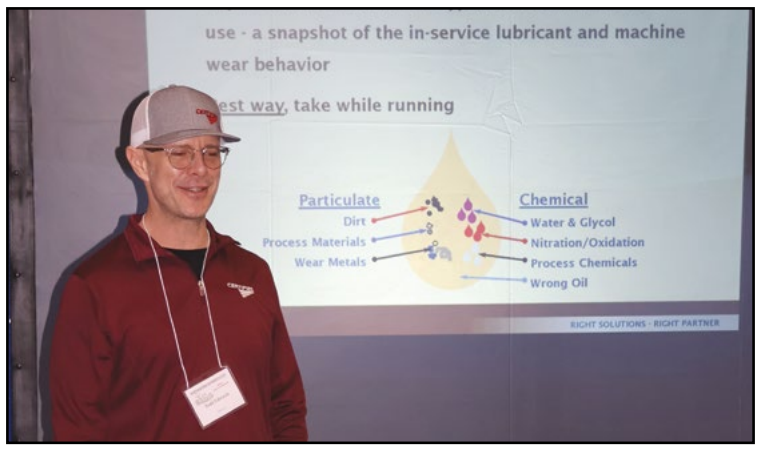

Class instructor Todd Edwards, Certified Labs, presents a class on lubrication and how the type of lubrication used can affect your ride and its operation (above left). Above right is a look at C.W. Craven's class on rigging during the NWSC safety seminar. AT/GARY SLADE

Giving their time and support to the seminar and its success each year is Davis Shows Northwest. Shown above left onsite are Geraldine Davis (middle) and Desiree Jimenez and student Kirk Town (left). Above right, making their first safety seminar from Remlinger Farms are (l to r): Ruben Cortez, Siegfred Kessler and Jose Luis Medina. AT/GARY SLADE

PORTLAND, Ore. — Attendance at the 2024 **Northwestern Showmen's Club** (NWSC) Safety Seminar is finally showing a rebound from the COVID pandemic drawing 120 students to the seminar held Feb. 19-23.

The NWSC Safety Seminar was established over 40 years ago to promote continuing education by amusement industry professionals. The Interactive classes and settings deliver a great venue for raising the level of safety awareness within the carnival Industry.

"This year we had 22 industry specialist instructors and 48 different classes offered, and it all took place at **Funtastic Traveling Shows** campus in Portland, Oregon," said NWSC's **Tracy Munoz**.

The NWSC Safety Seminar is aligned with **Portland Community College** for accreditation in their Continuing Education Program providing two continuing education units for participation and completion of the seminar.

Examples of classes held during the week included active shooter; human cost of accidents; emergency evacuations; inspecting tools; a truck shop and game shop; ride signs; belts, pulleys and motors; fire extinguisher safety; accident lawsuits; specific ride inspections; daily inspections; creating manuals; natural and operating disasters; rigging, forklift, welding, fasteners, oil and hydraulics; inflatable inspection and maintenance; and coaster wheels and safety inspection.

Munoz said NWSC Safety Seminar is unique in many ways.

"Our Seminar classes are geared around the everyday employee and upper management," she said. "We offer hands-on classes, such as welding, forklift, lubrication, ride inspections, etc. We provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for all participants with a banquet dinner

▸ **See NWSC, page 51**

The NWSC Safety Seminar is held on the campus of Funtastic Shows in Portland, Oregon. AT/GARY SLADE

While giving a tour of the Funtastic Shows winter quarters, Ron Burback (above left) points out the reserved work space John Eyerly, Eyerly Aircraft Co., had on the grounds where he worked during his semi-retirement. Eyerly died November 6, 2023 at the age of 82. Fred Munoz (above middle) shows off the tasty pasta sauce for the evening's Italian sausage spaghetti dinner. Along with breakfast each morning, other food selections during the week included a fried chicken dinner, fajitas bar, Greek Gyros sandwiches and Munoz's famous spare ribs. At the NWSC Safety Seminar, hands-on training is offered each day, thanks to the seminar location at the winter quarters of Funtastic Traveling Shows, including welding training opportunities for the students (above right). AT/GARY SLADE

NWSC

Continued from page 50

and raffle prizes on the last night for only $200 for the four-day course. "

There also is a three-hour class that is called Carnival Tech for Dummies, presented by **Darnel Yarnell**. This is a class for beginners to attend, as well as regulars, as it teaches the basics. Beginners learn new things, and regulars are reminded of important topics to stay on top of. After attending this class, a free test is administered for certification.

If that isn't enough, the seminar also offers **NAARSO** and **AIMS** testing, CPR classes and certifications.

Munoz said since NWSC is a nonprofit, all the teachers volunteer their time and experience.

"We have companies that fund the supplies and food," she said. "These are the industry's safety power players that believe that education is our first defense in amusement industry safety."

Munoz sent out a special thanks to their sponsors: *Amusement Today*, **McGowan Allied Insurance, Sweet Cheeks Concessions, Showfolks of America, Davis Shows Northwest, Funtastic Shows, Martin Vine, Outdoor Business Association** and **Hass Wilkerson.**

•nwshowmensclub.com

Longtime NWSC Safety Seminar instructor and supporter C. W. Craven, CW Fair Lift, makes a funny face for the *AT* camera while teaching this class on rigging. AT/GARY SLADE

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More than 260 attend semiannual Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar

AT: *B. Derek Shaw*
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Quality Assurance Inspector Randall Arndt makes a presentation in one of the eight concurrent classroom settings (above left). Walt Remmert, director, Bureau of Ride and Measurements Standards, provided remarks on Wednesday morning's opening session (above right). AT/B. DEREK SHAW

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Held twice each year, the Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar trains and tests hundreds of amusement ride inspectors in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and beyond. From February 27 to 29, 262 people from various amusement operations/attractions received ride safety training and testing conducted by third-party operator **Slaggert Risk Management** for the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Ride and Measurements Standards**. Classroom participants were primarily from Pennsylvania and neighboring states; however, there were attendees/instructors from 14 states. Of the 262 attendees were 150 scheduled to take new, renewal or upgraded inspector testing during the seminar.

This spring, 220 hours of instruction were available during the three days. Seminar participants selected the specialty courses they felt most beneficial for their career path, job description, abilities and employer benefit. Some of the course areas included inflatables; amusement, FEC and carnival rides; extreme sports; regulations, inspections and compliance; water attractions; maintenance; go-karts; zip lines and climbing walls. Weather's impact on outdoor events was Tuesday morning's opening session. The active shooter course has been so popular, it was offered twice on Wednesday to accommodate the demand. That training was presented by the **Pennsylvania State Police**.

Fred Strathmeyer, deputy secretary for plant industry and consumer protection with the Department of Agriculture, spoke to the entire group at the opening session on the second day of training. "We have a very unique situation here in the state of Pennsylvania, in that we allow for third-party inspection of our equipment. With that comes this type of seminar where they (inspectors) have to be trained at least every third year. Our statistics in the state of Pennsylvania are very good. That's because of these people who are trained regularly. We really do hold a high standard, That's important for the citizens to know. They can be assured that at a minimum, those rides have certainly been looked at and inspected and are safe to ride."

"I recognize it is the effort of you [the attendees] that keeps Pennsylvanians and its visitors safe," said **Walt Remmert**, director of the Bureau in his opening remarks. He thanked those in attendance, mentioned the department is here to serve, the inspectors, the owner/operators and the public, and talked about the state's unofficial safety record. Remmert tried to make their mission clear, which is safety and compliance through mutual respect and,

▸ **See SEMINAR, page 53**

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Attractions benefit from onsite and cloud-based hybrid technology solutions

DALLAS, Texas — As the amusement industry — and family entertainment centers, specifically — include more technology-based solutions, operators are faced with the challenges of understanding the benefits and necessity of what's available to them. Protecting data has become a high-priority. To maximize results and ensure consistent operation, a hybrid system has become a popular solution.

"A hybrid system is a strategic combination of both cloud-based systems and onsite or on-premises-based systems," offered **Andy Welsh**, chief technology officer of **Embed**. "Cloud systems feature computing services delivered over the internet while on-premises systems process service done by onsite servers and other hardware."

On-premises servers ensure business maintenance and continuity even when the internet is unavailable, keeping gameplay and sales always up and running.

"FECs can benefit largely from well-designed hybrid systems, as these leverage key features of both systems," added Welsh. "Moving data online will keep on-premises servers optimized for operations, ensuring hardware is focused on its job of managing gameplay and sales while data goes to the cloud for analyses."

FECs gain a competitive edge when they can remain operational even when their network is down.

"Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions should compliment hybrid systems," commented Welsh. "Operators using Embed products get secure eCommerce via SaaS solutions like the Mobile Wallet and data analysis and visualization through the STATS business intelligence dashboard."

Without a reliable data center partner, even multiple backup onsite servers can be overworked during an outage, causing downtimes.

"At Embed, we partner with **Amazon Web Services** (AWS) for our customers' data center platform for our cloud-based solutions," stated Welsh. "AWS is trusted by brands like **NASA**, **Apple**, **Disney+**, **Netflix** and the **NFL**."

SEMINAR

Continued from page 52

where necessary, education.

The 82 instructors and staff are all volunteers with a wide spectrum of specialties that impact the amusement industry, from all across the country. Testing was provided for Class 1 and 2 ride inspectors, general qualified inspectors and specialized inspectors. The Pennsylvania certification is recognized in many states across the country, including Recognized Certified Maintenance Technician, the program in place in New Jersey.

Interestingly, 29 voting members of ASTM F-24 committee on amusement devices participated in the training.

Phil Slaggert, Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar coordinator, was asked about the outcome of the spring curriculum. "It was a really good program," he said. "[There were] eight breakouts on Tuesday, 13 breakouts on Wednesday and 12 breakouts on Thursday, across nine license categories in the Commonwealth."

The training contained numerous new class offerings, including the impact of social media on midway operations, Pennsylvania child labor law compliance for entertainment venues, navigating zip lines and challenge courses – lessons for accidents and incidences and waterpark operational safety.

Three of the key players in the program (l to r): Walt Remmert, director of the Bureau; Fred Strathmeyer, deputy secretary for plant industry and consumer protection; and Phil Slaggert, Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar coordinator. Slaggert is the third-party operator providing the instruction. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has inspected and registered amusement rides under the Amusement Ride Safety Act since 1984 and regularly participates in education and outreach seminars. The next Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar is scheduled for November 12-14, 2024, at the **Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center**, ib Harrisburg, Pa.

The Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminars are not to be confused with the annual Parks and Carnival Education (PACE) seminar, jointly sponsored by the **Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association** and the **Pennsylvania Amusement Park & Attractions.** That seminar, presented by the **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials** (NAARSO), is scheduled for October 29 – November 1, at **Bloomsburg University** for the classroom portion. Hands-on training will be at **Knoebels Amusement Resort.** PACE offers inspector training for Pennsylvania-certified inspectors and/or NAARSO levels.

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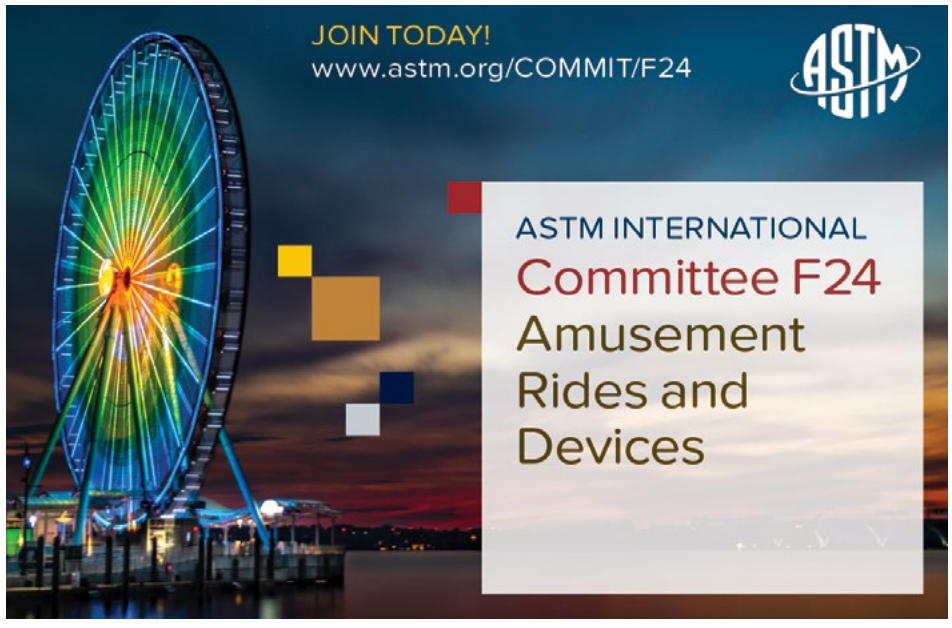

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